

## NEWMAN IN IRELAND

DR. Newman, in 1845, not ten years after he had left Oxford, came as a 'poor English innocent' to Catholic Ireland, Ireland broken after the famine, after the days of Davis, into the political generation of Sadlier and Keogh, the generation when the Irish language had begun quickly to melt away, when Ireland's poor emigrants were rushing to success or to ruin in America; and the Irish at home were being brought up in 'National' Schools, where no history might be taught, and where every influence tended to take from a people right national pride. Yet this people had one unbroken bond with the past, its religion; though the chiefs thereof were bishops fundamentally opposed in their ideas, as to how the religious life of the Irish should be reorganized and prepared for England's new equalizing political rights, putting Catholics into positions of public trust, infiltrating anglicization at all pores of the Irish body politic, attempting to give the needed higher education by the hands of a Protestant power unready to satisfy the instincts, or to build upon the principles, of an old Catholic people, who desired perhaps they knew not what, but who were ready to follow their bishops, and were conscious of distress in the new glare of what was brought by the foreign schoolmastering, with its worship of material success, its unimaginative practical commonplace, its dreary official irreligion, and its ideals of cleanliness, order, industry, and commercialism, together with dull uniformity, and a British imperialism; the whole thing, 'Philistine,'<sup>1</sup> as we say, to the core, hostile to local traditions of the realities

<sup>1</sup> 'On the side of beauty and taste, vulgarity; on the side of morals and feeling, coarseness; on the side of mind and spirit, unintelligible—this is Philistinism' (M. Arnold, in *Celtic Literature*, VIII).

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and varieties of smaller nationalities, and to everything that would make an Irishman care to live in Ireland more than in any other imperial area.

Into such a helpless Ireland Newman came, an Englishman as little commonplace as Shakespeare, as much of a literary artist as Milton, with a nature as sensitive as a Shelley, falling on the thorns of life and bleeding. If one can picture the antithesis of his contemporary, Lord Maculay, 'that great apostle of the Philistines,' such an antithesis was Newman, that 'miracle of intellectual delicacy.'<sup>2</sup>

He was a man, too, of the largest intellectual sympathy; with marvellous power of putting himself into the minds of others. He hated red-tape, machinery, committees, talk and humbug; and he loved and believed in the action of the man who knows and is strong, who dares, denies himself, suffers, and mayhap dies, for a cause. It is the individual that matters. The selfseeker, the mere politician, the easy-going lover of his comfort, do not count. He who ventures, wins, and saves his life, though he lose it. That was Newman from first to last. Nor would he give his heart and judgment only to those who followed in his line; they might have their high hopes, which he might in part mistrust. But they were the stuff he would use for his work. They might make mistakes; but in his own word, 'it is better to make mistakes than to make nothing.' And so, with his trust in honest men, he approached the young Irelanders—objects of mere suspicion to that strong and good priest, Archbishop of Armagh, afterwards of Dublin, Dr. Cullen. And thus Newman might be said to stand, as it were with Davis and his young laymen, against O'Connell and the priests. That is only a rough suggestive way of putting it. Priests such as Archbishop MacHale, of Tuam, had as much liking for the Young Ireland

<sup>2</sup> M. Arnold, *Essays in Criticism*.

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spirit as Archbishop Cullen had it in horror. And as to Dr. Newman, if he was not, before all, a man of religion and a priest of holy life, he was nothing. He was an artist who could have been a great poet or who possibly could have been a great musician. And he was a man of letters to his finger-tips. So that he was no saint, he said; for, 'Ah, my dear, the saints do not love the classics.'

Anyhow, we reflect again, on his personality, that he was able to enter into others, to be flexible, to make allowance, and to love all that was noble. Therefore, of the day when he came among Irishmen, it is thus he speaks: 'But again there was a knot of men who in 1848 had been quasi rebels; they were clever men, most of them. I did not care much for their political opinions. Dr. Moriarty introduced them to me, and I made them Professors. They are the ablest men who have belonged to the University; such are Professor O'Curry<sup>3</sup> and Professor O'Sullivan. I can never be sorry for asking their assistance, not to take them would have been preposterous. There you had good men—Irishmen; did not Dr. Cullen wish Irish? Had he not warned me against English and Scotch? If I did not take men made ready to my hand, desirable on their own account, desirable because their fellows were not to be found, I must put up, if not with English and Scotch, with incapable priests; is this what Dr. Cullen wanted? . . . Dr. Cullen always compared Young Ireland to Young Italy, and with the most intense expression of words and countenance assured me they never came right—never—he knew them from his experience of Rome.' Bishop Moriarty wrote to Newman in 1855: 'I do not at all share in Dr. Cullen's distrust of those he calls Young Ire-

<sup>3</sup> 'He belongs to the race of giants in literary industry and research—a race now almost extinct,' says M. Arnold (*Celtic Literature*, p. 28).

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landers. I hope his Grace will live to know them better.'

Dr. MacHale, protector of his Connaught poor, indignant at the rich oppressors, scornful of corrupting corrupted Catholics,<sup>4</sup> wished, at least in a general way, for a University rooted in Irish sentiment and Irish tradition. The English Rector, in his last year, noted how the men with Young Ireland spirit called for the University to throw itself on the country, and then it could, and would, gather poor scholars in crowds. But, though that was not Newman's plan of a place for liberal culture—for he said: 'I do complain of the country gentlemen both of England and Ireland, and I say that you cannot have a University till the gentlemen take it up'—yet he said of the Young Ireland plan: 'Well, I think this is good, too; but it is far too Young Irish for Dr. Cullen; and I think would fail on this precise ground if on no other.'

It seemed to Newman<sup>5</sup> that if there be a nation, which in matters of intellect does not want 'protecting,' to use the political word, it is the Irish—'sure to fill the majority of chairs in their own University, from the sheer claims of talent, though these chairs were open to the world.' The University was attacked in Irish papers as English; even as Cardinal Moran attacked Newman's memory in this respect, shortly before his own death, for bringing over a shoal of English professors. Newman had explained, that the Rector was English, the Vice-Rector Irish, nine of the regular professors Irish, one English. Of all offices,

<sup>4</sup> 'Our high Catholics are rotten to the heart's core, and our middle classes are fast corrupting in the same manner, the love of self and place. In no country can one find a faithful people that has suffered so much for the unworthy, ungrateful, and iniquitous representatives who have betrayed them, as the Catholics in Ireland.'

<sup>5</sup> *Historical Sketches*, i, 68.

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Irish held sixteen, English six, Scotland, Guernsey and Italy one each.

Dr. Newman did, of course, look to a University making Ireland a sort of Mecca for all English-speaking Catholics. But to Phillips de Lisle—writing in 1852 to the Earl of Shrewsbury—‘An Imperial University in Ireland is a pure absurdity.’ Newman did think the Catholic University of Ireland a matter which concerned England especially. Using Dr. Newman’s *My Campaign in Ireland*, Mgr. MacCaffrey, in his *History of the Catholic Church in the Nineteenth Century*, says: ‘He left England for what he conceived to be a great English interest.’ True; but not the whole truth. In 1800 Cardinal Newman looked back to Ireland: ‘I came there with the simple desire and aim to serve a noble people who I felt had a great future. I know well, or if this be presumptuous to say, I sincerely believe that a desire to serve Ireland was the ruling motive of my writings and doings while I was with you. How could I have any other? What right-minded Englishman can think of this country’s conduct towards you in times past without indignation, shame, and remorse? How can any such man but earnestly desire, should his duty take him to Ireland, to be able to offer to her some small service in expiation of the crimes which his own people have in former times committed there?’

Writing on ‘The Tradition of Civilization in Ireland,’ his dream for his University is shadowed in his words, ‘The English language and the Irish race are over-running the world.’

The imperialistic Bishop Moriarty, always Newman’s friend, was not un-Irish in sympathy, yet understood the English Catholics and the converts better than did the Roman archbishop, Cullen, better than did the Hibernian archbishop, MacHale. Not that both these holy men did not wish to understand them.

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But they were men of fixed ideas. To Dr. Cullen, England and Oxford were not of the Roman traditions, and not ready enough to fall into line, and too ready, according to another life, another tradition, to show individuality, not to say independence.\* To Dr. MacHale, the Oxford converts were, at first, objects of some suspicion, as probably sharing the ultra-English national feelings of the old English Catholics like Lord Shrewsbury.

To the end of his life Newman tried to put himself in the place of the Irish people. At eighty, he recalls that he 'knew one of the leaders of the Smith O'Brien movement in 1848; his boast was, that from Henry II's time the people had *never* condoned the English occupation.' And even later, in 1887, when hardly able to hold his pen, in one of his latest words, the Cardinal used his old habit of putting himself absolutely at another's, even an opponent's, point of view, and repeated to the English Jesuit poet, Gerald Hopkins (whose picture of anti-English feeling in Ireland was to Newman 'appalling, but not on that account untrustworthy'), that 'The Irish Patriots hold that they never yielded themselves to the sway of England, and therefore never have been rebels.' Years before, not long after he left Ireland, he had noted that in England 'really we are simply in the dark as to what is going on beyond our four seas. How dark we are as to Ireland, as even I could see from having been there.' He told an English acquaintance of what seemed to him 'the hatred felt for England in all ranks in Ireland; how great friends of mine did not scruple to speak to me of the "bloody

\* Sixtus V (1585--90), legislating even for the Catholic remnant, in the English college at Rome, directed 'that an English Rector should be given to Englishmen,' who had found the Italian Rector's discipline 'adapted rather for young children than for youths growing into manhood.'

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English," how cautious and quiet Government people simply confessed they would gladly show their teeth if they were sure of biting. But he would not believe me,' Newman goes on; 'and that has been the state of the mass of our people. Even now (1866) they are slow to believe that Fenianism is as deeply rooted as it is. Every Irishman is but waiting his opportunity; and if he is friendly to this country, it is because he despairs.' If he there recalls blunt incivility to the stranger, he found the haters of England 'abundantly warm-hearted and friendly to individual Englishmen; of that I have clear experience in my own case; but what I believe is . . . that there is not one Anglo-philist in the nation. Moreover, to clench the difficulty, the Irish character and tastes are very different from the English.' Yet 'the Englishman does not at first recollect that he comes among the Irish people as a representative of persons and actions and catastrophes, which it is not pleasant to anyone to think about; that he is responsible for the deeds of his forefathers.' He is 'one of a strong, unscrupulous, tyrannous race standing upon the soil of the injured.' The Englishman dealing with Ireland 'does not bear in mind that it is as easy to forget injuring as it is difficult to forget being injured.' 'Don't think,' had said this Englishman, who would rather, he exclaimed, be an Englishman than belong to any other nation under the sun, and who thought his countrymen generous, and ready to confess, with a repentance greater than their sin, 'don't think I am tempted to despair about *England*. I am in as little despair about England as about the Pope. I think they have both enormous latent forces.' But, recalling the land where he went, a foreign man, to serve and teach, and thinking of the Irish national heart into which England had burnt the deep hate, Newman said: 'If I were an Irishman, I should be (in heart) a rebel.' So much for his power of putting

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himself in other people's shoes. So much for his general attitude towards Ireland.

As to the founding of the Catholic University in mid-nineteenth century Ireland, with one University long established, but closed still, for honours and offices, to all but Protestants, the experience he endured made him doubt whether the sagacity of the Holy See was as great as he had thought, when viewing its action through the ages. Doubtless, he could not judge as fully of what was desirable or possible, when the perspective was stirred by his personal feelings and hopes, and by the smarting of his wounds; yet there was truth, to be sure, in his thought, that Pope Pius IX might have known more of Ireland than he did. The sentiment, as to sagacity and the Holy See, history had impressed on Newman; history impresses it on him still; but 'it has been very considerably weakened as far as the present Pope (Pius IX) is concerned, by the experience of the result of the policy which his chosen councillors had led him to pursue.' The ex-Rector adds, in retrospection: 'I cannot help thinking . . . that if he had known more of the state of things in Ireland, he—if he could not religiously recognize the Queen's Colleges—would at least have abstained from decreeing a Catholic University. I was a poor innocent as regards the actual state of things in Ireland when I went there, and did not care to think about it, for I relied on the word of the Pope; but from the event, I am led to think it not rash to say that I knew as much about Ireland as he did.'

Churchmen in Ireland were found, in plenty, to say at the time what their University Rector acknowledged long after. The Archbishop of Tuam was 'not sanguine as to the success of the effort to establish a University'; the Bishop of Limerick prophesied nothing but failure, and said, 'You will never do any good

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with the University till you put yourself in connection with the Head of the Empire.' Another Bishop explained: 'When people are mixed, and society is mixed, education must be mixed.' Dr. Russell, president of Maynooth, was 'desponding.' And the Provincial of the Jesuits said that 'the class of youths *did not exist* in Ireland who would come to the University. 'My advice to you is this: go to the Archbishop and say, "Don't attempt the University, give up the idea." This was the greeting from the first ecclesiastic I called upon.'

From the Catholic side, this was not encouraging. Ireland as a whole, even as a Catholic whole, was not with the imported Rector. Bishops brought him over. But the Irish Bishops had no unified policy, nationally or imperially, not to say linguistically and educationally. They did leave choice of professors to their Rector, who thought that 'nearly all the professors had better be laymen.' Nevertheless his impression remained that 'The real serious cause of distance, jealousy, distrust, and disapproval, as regards me and my doings, was the desire I had to make the laity a substantive power in the University.' He was indignant at the irresponsible spending of the money collected from the people. 'I believed laymen would put an end to this.' He urged a Finance Committee—'a great source of suspicion and irritation to Dr. Cullen.' 'I thought that such an arrangement would conciliate the laity, and would interest them in the University more than anything else. They 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.' 'Dr. Cullen's idea,' he saw, 'was to have priest professors, and to have students under a sort of seminary rule; he seemed to think that the lay mind, if free, would run to revolution and subversion of all authority, of which

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to him in Ireland there was the example in Young Irelandism.' Newman was always on the way to range himself on the side of the *Areopagitica*, not praising 'a fugitive and cloistered virtue,' the author of which words himself, however, also wrote :

' License they mean, when they cry liberty ;  
For who loves that must first be wise and good.'

To Newman's optimism, though ' nothing great or living can be done except when men are self-governed and independent,' yet ' this is quite consistent with a full maintenance of ecclesiastical authority. Men will not fight well under the lash.'

In a way, Newman was on the side of those who were against him and the University—Archbishop Murray of Dublin and Dr. Russell of Maynooth, who, to Newman, stood for intellectual interests. Because their ideal would be more of what he dreamed, a University that should provide (said his first normal report), ' Philosophical defences of Catholicity, and create a Catholic literature.' And such was not the University ideal before the actual University's ecclesiastical patrons, the party of Dr. Cullen, the ' political and devotional party ' Newman called it, which, at the Synod of Thurles, had won by a single vote, condemning the Queen's Colleges. He would not attack these neutral colleges. He would but do his own positive work, on Catholic principles, in friendly rivalry, as far as learning went. But he was to be used as a

' Faith ought to be tried and tested, if it be faith. I don't like that faith, which (as I have seen written to a new convert) is a " precious tender plant " to be sedulously guarded under a glass cover, or in a hothouse . . . Our religion is a tough principle within us, bearing heavy weights and hard work, or it is worth very little.' So: ' I have little belief in true vocations being destroyed by contact with the world—such intercourse as is natural or necessary . . . What I shrink from with dread, as the more likely danger, is not the Church losing priests whom she ought to have had, but gaining priests whom she never should have been burdened with'

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controversial weapon; and that he resented, for himself, for sound learning and for the faith. 'If Dr. Cullen's ideals be put in practice for the University,' said Newman, 'in that case it simply will be priest-ridden. I mean, men who do not know literature and science will have the direction of the teaching.'

His Professor of Fine Arts, Hungerford Pollen, architect of the beautiful University church in Stephen's Green, writes of some of the bishops who could not condescend to treat Dr. Newman as an equal. 'Newman on his side preserved towards them an attitude of painstaking politeness. He was also tried by the line taken by these prelates in respect of intellectual problems. "They regard any intellectual man as being on the road to perdition," he said.' To another English convert professor, Ornsby—biographer of Hope-Scott—he wrote, that 'Dr. Cullen has treated me from the first like a scrub.' Yet Newman—'I am as sensitive as an eel with his skin off'—declared, that he 'ever had the truest reverence for the good Cardinal Cullen,' out of whose face there seem to Newman's imagination to be seen shining the countenances of all the Saints of Rome. Dr. Newman felt Dr. Cullen to be holy and self-sacrificing, of priestly heroism, noble in his way, but inflexible, unsympathetic with the unprofessional world, dominating if not domineering, conscientious of course, a man of high principle, but ignorant in his very capability.

In his fighting and fretting under Archbishop Cullen's régime, Newman meant only that one has to live in the world; that higher education is to fit men for a wicked world; and that, as dangers have to be met, one must know what they are, must understand views of opponents, must be prepared for attack and ready with reply, and well provided with the means of expressing a Catholic philosophy of life as it really is, with its demands for judgment on education, on powers

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of mind, on discoveries, on taste, on liberty, on morals, on things temporal, and the relation to things eternal. To meet scientific worldliness and its 'formidable seductions,' 'the higher and the middle classes of Ireland and Great Britain must be guarded by a new development of religious life, as manifested not only in pious and charitable sodalities, but in education and in literature.'

Still, there is this surely to be said, that the Irish bishops knew Ireland well. And Newman was an idealist, if a hard worker. Even his English biographer reflects that 'to act on ideal principles, with little or no attempt to forecast accurately what was practicable, was to court failure.' And why should one think that Newman, in his comparative ignorance of things as they were in Ireland, was not hard to manage, with his great and perhaps impossible, though inspiring, dreams; a man, too, of fierce thoughts, and difficult to deal with; and his sensitiveness, for all that he was so trustful, so generous, so lovable? Was it always other people's fault that 'I have laboured in England to be misrepresented, back-bitten and scorned. I have laboured in Ireland with a door ever shut in my face'? The humbler poet within him said:

'I'm ashamed of myself, of my tears and my tongue,  
So easily fretted, so often unstrung;  
Mad at trifles to which a chance moment gives birth,  
Complaining of heaven and complaining of earth.'

So, to his gentler St. Philip; to whom, in his 'admirable patience,' he prayed, for 'true fortitude under all the trials of life: I sicken under every light affliction: I fire up at every trifling contradiction.' And if he had the mark of genius, a certain lofty and proud confidence in himself, it was all within; and he often ate his heart out, because he had, as he confessed, no force to rule. He wrote to Manning the year he resigned from Dublin, that rightly, years ago, his own

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line about St. Gregory Nazianen had been applied to himself :

‘Thou could’st a people raise, but could’st not rule.’

He suffered fools not gladly—nor, perhaps, wise men, at times. He had the sensitiveness of the weak, but also of the noble. He was urbane, over-refined if you will, but underneath his politeness, or stiffness, even when matched against such a respected opponent as Dr. Cullen, he was deeply moved: the strain was great, and he was often despondent, and was not given a free hand; and yet again could see, finally, that he was fighting the facts of the Ireland as it was, which he could not make use of; for he was dreaming of an Ireland that was not.

But his work lives in its failure. To his venture is due much that has come about, in attempt, and in foundation, for Irish University education since. And to him is largely owed the great pioneer Celtic work of O’Curry, acknowledged in the learned Irishman’s reverent dedication to the English scholar: ‘This great scholar and pious priest, whose warmly-felt and oft-expressed sympathy with Erin, her wrongs and her hopes, as well as her history, I am rejoiced,’ said O’Curry (publishing through Newman, at the University’s expense), ‘to have an opportunity thus publicly to acknowledge.’ And Newman’s Medical School in Dublin has never ceased to be of note: it gave the Irish people one more standing place in the land, off which the unjust had striven to shove them. Those, with the University Church, and a University Gazette, were his four plans for stretching out into Irish life. Then, the *Idea of a University* remains the great book in English on University Education. And it was spoken in Dublin.

As he looked back at the end, he seemed, in those seven Irish years, to recall ‘nothing but kindness from all classes of people.’

W. F. P. STOCKLEY.