



Centro

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The Blessed John Henry Newman

During his recent visit to the UK, Pope Benedict XVI beatified Cardinal John Henry Newman, taking him one further step towards sainthood. Originally an Anglican, Newman became Roman Catholic in 1845.

This *Centro* has an appreciation by a Roman Catholic biographer of Newman and an Anglican Newman scholar.

A beacon of faith

Roderick Strange

When people think of John Henry Newman, they often think first of his intellect. His influence on Christian thought has ranged far. But his beatification by Pope Benedict XVI on 19 September this year is not to be understood as a tribute to his ideas. Nor is it simply the Catholic Newman who is beatified. **The whole man, his entire life, is being acknowledged in the beatification. We learn from his goodness and virtue, and we should learn from his mistakes as well.** As the Pope himself remarked some years ago, 'Holiness does not consist in never having erred or sinned.'

In 1816, when he was merely fifteen, Newman underwent an experience of conversion that impressed on him 'the thought of two and two only absolute and luminously self-evident beings', himself and his Creator. This experience had an evangelical flavour which in time subsided, but the force of that conviction never left him and instilled in him a sense of reality as a union between what is seen and what is unseen.

Then, as a Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford, Newman came to value intellectual excellence and later, as a leader of the Oxford Movement, refined that care for scholarship through his study of the Fathers of the Church.

These features, faith, scholarship, and the Fathers, can be seen as Newman's Anglican legacy, not because they are exclusively Anglican, but because they are the evident fruit of his Anglican years. The Catholic legacy has a different

character, again not exclusively Catholic. It bears witness to the cross he carried by remaining faithful to his Catholic path, in spite of having to endure constantly disappointments, frustrations, and the thwarting of the plans that were thrust upon him.

Newman remained true to what was good wherever he found it. In 1860, he opposed a plan to build a Catholic Church in Oxford, because he feared it might weaken the good the Church of England was doing there. 'Catholics did not make us Catholics;' he



declared, 'Oxford made us Catholics.' And some years later he was to affirm, 'The Fathers made me a Catholic.' The two statements are not at odds. And it is not difficult to see why his contemporary, Cardinal Henry Manning, could complain that Newman's work was 'the old Anglican patristic, literary, Oxford tone transplanted into the Church'. But Newman was unaffected by the fears that made Manning anxious. Confident in his Catholicism, he was not going to 'kick down the [patristic] ladder by which [he] ascended into the Church'.

When he was made a Cardinal, he felt that doubts about his Catholicism had been lifted for ever; beatified, his witness becomes clearer still. He is a beacon of faith and fidelity, whatever the cost.

Photo of the portrait of Blessed John Henry Newman at the Basilica of San Giorgio in Velabro, Rome where he was titular cardinal. The church is under the care of the Crosier Order (Canons Regular of the Order of the Holy Cross).

John Henry Newman: Ecumenical conservative or pioneer?

R. William Franklin provides an Anglican perspective and raises some questions

John Henry Newman (1801-1890) is the brilliant nineteenth century theologian who made a deeply significant impact on the Church of England, and the future evolution of Anglicanism. Along with Edward Pusey (1800-1882) and John Keble (1792-1866), he led the Oxford Movement, a revival of Catholicism within Anglicanism, begun in 1833 and lasting until 1845, the year Newman joined the Roman Catholic Church.



Mass to beatify John Henry Newman, Crofton Park, Birmingham

These Oxford Movement leaders argued that the Church of England was THE Catholic Church in England. They emphasized and propagated tenets of Catholic theology within Anglicanism, such as the Divine nature of the Church, Bishops as successors of the Apostles, the continuity of the Catholic Apostolic Succession within the ministry of Anglican Bishops, the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, as well as the Sacrificial nature of the Mass, and the Catholic nature of the Anglican priesthood. The Movement revived Catholic ceremonial at Anglican Eucharistic celebrations, and understood that the reconciliation of the Church of England with the Holy See was the final goal of this second, and Catholic, Reformation. All of this permanently altered the theology, ritual, and pastoral practice of Anglicanism.

Gradually, however, John Henry Newman began to doubt the Catholicity of the Church of England, in the course of controversies over the episcopate, the role of parliament in the government of the Church, and whether a home could be found for a Tridentine understanding of Catholicism within the Church of England. Newman came to the conclusion that the Church of England was fundamentally a Protestant Church, and so in 1845 he joined the Church of Rome, bringing with him a number of converts. This led to bitter controversy, and Newman was regarded as a traitor to his people and to his former Church.

Therefore, Anglicans today have a complex regard for the ecumenical significance of John Henry Newman. He seems to symbolize the view that the ecumenical quest will ultimately lead Anglicans back into the Roman Catholic Church. He could be said to foreshadow the provisions that Pope Benedict made for former Anglicans in the fall of 2009 to be reconciled with the Holy See, while bringing with them some, but not all, aspects of their Anglican patrimony.

To many Anglicans, therefore, Newman may be said to represent still today a pre-Vatican II understanding of the relation of the Church of England to the Roman Catholic Church: Anglicans should admit their errors, and submit to the one true Catholic Church.

An ecumenical pioneer

However, Newman is also an ecumenical pioneer, in the sense defined by the Second Vatican Council. He upheld the lasting importance of Christian friendship between members of the different branches of the Church, even in times of controversy and disagreement, and he believed theological dialogue across the lines of denominational division to be in accord with the will of Jesus Christ. The many long years of continuing exchanges of Newman with his former Anglican colleagues, above all with Edward Pusey, could be said to be a precious precursor of the official Anglican - Roman Catholic International Theological Dialogue of today, whose goal is still the full sacramental communion of our two Churches, at some time in the future.

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www.anglicancentreinrome.org/resources

New resources on the website

Anglicanism and the Western Christian Tradition: Continuity and Change was the title of an exhibition in the Vatican Museum in 2002. It is now open to a wider audience in electronic form.

Moving Together in Unity and Mission shows the current state of Anglican-Roman Catholic relations in England, with some illustrations of IARCCUM themes. It is hoped that more examples from across the Anglican Communion can be added.