Newman and the Ultramontanes

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On April 22, 1862, John Henry Newman wrote to his friend of twenty-five years, William George Ward:

I have to endure, in spite of your real affection for me, a never-dying misgiving on your part that I am in some substantial matter at variance with you—while I for my part sincerely think that on no subject is there any substantial difference between us, as far as theology is concerned.¹

Newman was responding to Ward’s admission that he was “greatly distressed” to hear, from a third party, of Newman’s supposed intention to support a liberal Catholic journal, the *Home & Foreign Review*. In fact, Newman was not associated with this journal. But the rift with Ward, his most illustrious disciple from Oxford days and a prominent lay theologian, continued to fester, and it was generally understood at the time that Newman had Ward in mind when he complained, in his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* in 1864, of “a violent ultra party, which exalts opinions into dogmas, and has it principally at heart to destroy every school of thought but its own.”² Contemporary historians, who have the benefit of many volumes of Newman’s published correspondence, are also privy to his more private thoughts, as when in March of 1864 he wrote to Sir John, later Lord Acton, “It seems impossible that active and sensible men can remain still under the dull tyranny of Manning and Ward.”³

Most contemporary Catholic students of Newman have tended to concur in his negative assessment of the principal Ultramontane Catholics of Victorian England: Ward, the longtime editor of the *Dublin Review*, and Henry Edward Manning, Archbishop of Westminster from 1865 to 1892, and after 1875 a Cardinal. Even conservative Newman scholars typically write disparagingly of Ward and Manning.⁴ I shall argue, however, that the reputations of Ward and Manning, seen in the light of Newman’s personal struggles with them in the 1860s, have unduly suffered from the one-sided treatment they have been given, and, furthermore, that recognition of their positive contributions to the Catholic intellectual tradition is long overdue. Their differences with Newman stemmed largely from their different assessments of contemporary culture and how they thought Catholic culture stood and ought to stand in relation to it. As Newman himself said to Ward, their differences were, in the end, less matters of theological affirmation or denial than of emphasis. Unlike Newman, Ward and Manning belonged to the nineteenth-century Catholic counter-revolution and thought that the Church in their day needed to be actively counter-cultural
in some important respects.

I will begin by describing the different paths by which these three men came to enter the Catholic Church as converts from the Church of England, an account which will help to make intelligible their differences of opinion over Catholic affairs in the 1860s.

“OXFORD MADE US CATHOLICS”

John Henry Newman was the great genius of the Oxford Movement of 1833-1845, sometimes called the Oxford Counter-Reformation. Through this movement, a large number of clergymen of the Church of England came to renounce their hereditary Protestantism and converted to the Catholic Church. Although Newman was not the only leader of the movement, he was its central figure. Let me briefly recount the crucial aspects of his conversion. At the age of fifteen, Newman had a profound experience of conversion, an evangelical awakening. As he put it: “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.” When he went up to Oxford a few years later, he was a thorough-going Protestant. As a young man there, he became attracted to a particularly impressive group of scholars, the noetics, from whom he gradually learned to see the inadequacy of the “sola scriptura” pillar of Reformation theology. And here was Newman's charism, his tremendous insight. Whereas for two hundred years Protestant theologians, faced with difficulties of scriptural interpretation, had relinquished articles of the ancient creed—many becoming Unitarians—Newman refused to do so. Instead, he turned to traditional sources for arguments to vindicate the whole creed: at first the seventeenth-century ‘high-church’ Anglican divines and then the Fathers of the fourth century. With a number of close friends, Newman also began to retrieve practical aspects of the Catholic tradition that had been lost to the Church of England. Asceticism, sacramental realism, renewed attention to the doctrine of justification, and finally, the mystery of the Church: step by step he studied and argued his way to the fullness of the Catholic faith, steadily opposed by those members of the Church of England hostile to his reforming spirit. In 1845, after numerous conflicts with the episcopacy, tremendous internal searching, a small but significant bit of prodding from Catholic critics, the prior conversion of several of his students and friends, and the formulation of a theory of doctrinal development by which to justify his decision, he left forever the Church of his birth.

It is well known that Newman’s life as a Catholic was full of frustrations both great and small. In large part, these frustrations were due to his lack of sympathy with certain aspects of Catholic culture as he encountered it in the Church of his day. Although a great master of the Latin tongue and probably the finest prose writer in the English language in the nineteenth century, his ability to speak modern foreign languages was limited: Italian he found particularly difficult, and perhaps this partly explains why he never had much sympathy for the life of the Church as he experienced it in Rome. The Italian peasantry seemed to him dirty, their Marian piety extravagant, and their priestly leadership theologically unsophisticated and authoritarian. In this regard he wrote in his Letter to the Duke of Norfolk: “the Rock of St. Peter on its summit enjoys a pure and serene atmosphere, but there is a great deal of Roman malaria at the foot of it.” Neither was he particularly fond of Ireland or of the Catholics of the Emerald Isle. His attempt, from 1852 to 1858, to found a Catholic University College in Dublin was, in the end, a failure mainly because Newman’s model of the educated, gentlemanly Catholic remained, in essence, an Oxford scholar. His effort to recreate an Oxford College in Dublin was thus destined to failure from the outset. In Dublin, he surrounded himself with aristocratic English students and faculty, rarely took an interest in the middle-class Irish students in his charge (who lived in a separate building), and had great difficulty relating to the Irish bishops whose university it was. In the 1860s, he came under suspicion in Rome and in certain circles in the Church in England because he lacked sympathy with the determination of Pius IX to defend his principality in central Italy; some thought him ungenerous towards the successor of St. Peter.

This is not to imply that Newman was not content as a Catholic far from it but only to suggest that his personal experiences as a Catholic were often painful. He was an introspective intellectual, a theologian of the greatest subtlety and complexity, and a man of rarified social background and aesthetic taste. The Catholic Church in England in the mid-nineteenth century was primarily a body of poor Irish immigrants in the large cities of Liverpool and London. Newman rightly thought his gifts would be better employed in ministering to the 200 or so families of Catholic aristocrats of recusant stock that is, to those families that had kept the ancient faith alive since the fifteenth century and to the growing numbers...
of converts from the Church of England. And it must be said that he was solicitous of the fate of the poor in Birmingham. But from first to last, Newman was an Englishman and by inclination a Tory. Great and in some ways saintly figure that he was, he was no man of the people, and the Catholic faith in most of Europe in the nineteenth century was emphatically a religion of the people. He once said, in a candid and wistful comment about how certain Catholic practices bothered him, “Catholics did not make us Catholics, Oxford made us Catholics.” In this sentiment, he was very different from his fellow converts Ward and Manning, who left behind Oxford’s dreaming spires with few regrets and embraced with enthusiasm their position as a foreign element within the hostile Protestant culture of Victorian England.

**THE CONVERSIONS OF WARD AND MANNING**

Both Ward and Manning came to the Catholic Church through the Oxford Movement, in which Ward played a pivotal and Manning a peripheral role. William George Ward went up to Christ Church in 1830 and became a fellow of Balliol in 1834, at which point he was duly ordained a priest of the Church of England. His distinguishing features included tremendous acumen for abstract logical and mathematical reasoning, love of conversation and public debate, and an effusive, almost bombastic personality. He came under the influence of Thomas Arnold’s “muscular Christianity,” with its twin emphases of self-critical introspection and moral improvement. But Arnold’s lack of theological rigor could not hold Ward, who had also imbibed a deep skeptical streak from metaphysical studies and yearned for a credible theological system to support his faith. Arnold had famously written against Newman and his band in an essay entitled the “Oxford Malignants,” and like him, Ward initially thought the reform movement motivated by a mere love of incense and antiquity. Then, in 1838, one sermon of Newman’s abruptly changed his assessment of the movement, which he realized was actually animated by a strong desire for personal holiness on the part of its adherents. Once started on the counter-reformation path Newman had begun, Ward’s desire for system soon led him to Catholic sources, especially Francisco Saurez and Joseph de Maistre. Unlike Newman, who by this time had several close disciples, Ward was unburdened by the cares of leadership and was unconcerned about the possibility of being accused of the crypto-Catholic subversion of Oxford undergraduates. He quickly pushed the issue of ecclesiology upon the somewhat reluctant Newman, eleven years his elder and by nature a more careful and cautious speculative thinker. In an attempt to satisfy Ward and his followers that a member of the Church of England might affirm the 39 Articles of Religion in a Catholic sense, Newman crafted the ill-fated Tract XC, the publication of which caused a general hue and cry about the Romeward direction of the Movement. Ward remained in the Church of England long enough to write a lengthy treatise entitled *The Ideal of a Christian Church*. Ward’s ideal was clearly Roman and papal, and when the book appeared in 1844, it was censured and he was stripped of his degrees. Over the next twelve months he resigned his fellowship, married, and, together with his wife, was received into the Catholic Church. Unlike Newman, who found the experience of conversion a mixture of “loss and gain” and felt poignantly the “parting of friends” which it entailed, Ward seems to have experienced unadulterated joy in his own conversion. By 1844, as his son Wilfrid tells us, he “did not, believe himself to be a priest, or to have the power of forgiving sins.” This skeptical aspect of Ward’s conversion is an important contrast to Newman’s conversion. Whereas Newman felt that he had been led by the inner promptings of divine grace throughout his long years in the Church of England and so remained sensitive to its godly qualities, Ward thought and felt the Church of England essentially empty. Compared to Newman, his conversion seems to have brought him a stronger subjective sense of gain, and a lesser sense of loss.

Henry Manning was altogether a different sort of man than either Ward or Newman, and his conversion was likewise in important ways different from theirs. While a young man at Oxford, he was flamboyant and in some ways truly extravagant, sometimes being seen around town in rakish lavender riding hose and high boots. So great were his debating powers and so hidden his piety that fellow students were sure that his close friend William Gladstone would go on to be the great churchman and Manning would become Prime Minister. The reversal in their respective fortunes came about, in Manning’s case at any rate, from a brush with the evangelical revival. After this first turn to Christian seriousness, Manning married the daughter of a prominent member of the evangelical wing of the Church of England and settled
down to the life of a country curate. Within four years, his wife had died and as a result Manning turned in upon himself and his beliefs. He corresponded with Newman and eagerly read his many writings. Unlike Ward, Manning was profoundly conscious of having been set aside for the gospel of Christ, that is, of his vocation as a priest. In Newman’s theology, he saw the tools to help him understand this great call at the very heart of his being. After Newman’s conversion in 1845, Manning read deeply in scholastic theology, still unconvincing as to the proper course of action. In 1847, while convalescing from an attack of tuberculosis, he traveled on the Continent to inspect at first hand Catholic life and culture and was strongly attracted by what he found. He had an audience with Pius IX, who was deeply impressed with the grave Protestant parson, attired in black, whom he had noticed genuflect to his passing carriage in St. Peter’s square. On the way home, while praying in the Cathedral in Milan, Manning experienced what he referred to as “a call” from St. Charles Borromeo, in whom he saw the Church of the Council of Trent personified. His subsequent conversion was as painful and drawn out as Newman’s, taking four more years to accomplish. In 1851, in the wake of the notorious Gorham affair, a disastrous judicial decision effectively rendering null any doctrinal authority of the Anglican bishops, he converted. At the time, he was Archdeacon of Chichester and marked out for further advancement in the Church of England thanks to his zeal as a pastor, his eloquence as a preacher, and his rigor as a theologian. Had he remained, it is almost certain he would have been Archbishop of Canterbury and probably the greatest pastor in the history of the Church of England.

In the 1850s, Ward, Manning and Newman each continued to go their separate ways. Ward taught theology at a seminary and raised a family. Newman split his time between Dublin and Birmingham and in both places was more harried and troubled than productive, but still managed to write great literary masterpieces such as his Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England and his Discourses on the Nature and Scope of University Education. Manning founded a religious community of secular priests, the Oblates of St. Charles Borromeo, which specialized in ministry to London’s Irish immigrant population. He rose in the esteem of Pius IX, who personally promoted him to the dignity of Provost of the Cathedral chapter of Westminster. In the 1860s, Manning, Newman, and Ward found themselves increasingly at odds, as Manning and Ward cleaved with great fervor and devotion to Pius IX and sought to bring to England the enthusiastic and militant spirit of the Continental Catholic revival, while Newman became the leader of those who wanted an expression of the Catholic faith more in keeping with their English traditions and sensibilities.

MORE ROMAN THAN ROME

The Catholic revival of the nineteenth century was dominated by what was called “ultramontanism,” literally “over-the-mountains-ism,” which referred to the desire on the part of zealous Catholics to refer all things across the Alps to the Pope in Rome. This was a movement of reaction against the tendency in the previous century to subordinate the Church to the state, variously called “Gallicanism” (in France), “Josephism” (in Austria), or “Febronianism” (in German Catholic principalities). At the root of the ultramontane sensibility was the conviction, classically expressed in Joseph de Maistre’s 1819 treatise On the Pope, that the papacy was the vital center of Christian civilization and that the French Revolution had been a scourge sent by God to clear away the anti-papal and, indeed, anti-Christian sins of the ancien régime. When the term “ultramontanism” is used today, it tends to evoke the disputes over papal infallibility leading up to the Vatican Council of 1869-70. But in the early 1860s in England, it implied not only a high sense of the papal office, but also affinity for continental devotional practices and certain views on Catholic affairs of a political and cultural nature. It is here, in the contested ground where theology, prudence, and temperament meet, that we find the differences between Newman and the Ultramontanes most clearly expressed. In what follows, I shall concentrate on two aspects of Catholic life on which they differed: first, their assessment of contemporary European politics, and, second, their judgment about university education for English Catholics. Far from being a “violent ultra party” on these matters, Ward and Manning were much more in harmony with the views of Pius IX than was Newman. The forthrightness with which they expressed themselves came from their sense...
that their position was under attack by liberals within and outside the Church.

COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARIES IN A PAN-EUROPEAN CATHOLIC TRADITION

In the realm of politics, the great question of the mid-nineteenth century was the “Roman Question”: would the nation of Italy be unified, and if so, what would be the position of the Papal States within that nation. During the French Revolution, the Napoleonic wars, and the revolution of 1848, the popes had temporarily lost control of their principality in central Italy, and nationalist leaders such as Mazzini and Garibaldi were never veiled in their intention to see the loss become permanent. Since 1849, French soldiers had protected the sovereignty of the pope against this revolution. In September of 1860, Emperor Napoleon III of France took a two-week cruise on the Mediterranean, knowing that his inability to direct French affairs while he was at sea would allow King Victor Emmanuel of Piedmont and his chief of state, Count Cavour, violently to annex the majority of the papal states, leaving Pius IX in possession only of Rome and a small region around the city. In return, Napoleon III received Nice and the Maritime Alps for France. Pius IX responded with excommunications and demonstrative censures of the revolution and Catholics around Europe were quick to join in the protest.

Newman, however, was not an enthusiastic defender of the Pope’s temporal claims. He tended to view the issue from the point of view of historical and theological abstraction, and sensed that the Papacy might well be more vital if unencumbered by the cares of state. Even if we think that history has largely shown this to be the case at least during the past century—it is not therefore true that the absorption of the papal states into a united Italy was either just or inevitable. In Manning’s view, the uprising against the temporal power of the pope was “essentially a denial of the divine institution of the Church,” and for him, to deny the authority of the Church was to deny the Holy Spirit. In the Italian revolution, then, he perceived the work of the anti-Christ. The policy of the English government in the period 1859 and after was officially one of non-intervention, but this really meant that the English navy functioned as the guarantee that Catholic nations would not intervene in affairs internal to the Italian peninsula. This policy left the Piedmontese army the only one in the field and rendered Pius IX’s volunteer defense force effectively hamstrung. Manning deplored this policy in the sharpest language, seeing in it and in the recent legalization of divorce in England the proof that “the English government has placed itself at this time at the head . . . of the anti-Catholic revolution of the world.”

Ward’s defense of the temporal sovereignty of the Pope and his assessment of contemporary European affairs were similar to Manning’s, but were put forward with the arguments of a philosopher rather than the warnings of a prophet. In 1863, he was given the occasion to comment on the theoretical issues at stake after a speech in which the prominent French Catholic politician Charles de Montalembert advocated the opinion that the best solution to the political and religious conflicts plaguing Europe was for the Church to acquiesce in the liberal solution of “A Free Church in a Free State.” By advocating this liberal solution in a speech before a large Catholic gathering in Belgium, Montalembert caused great offense to many European Catholics. Although he had long been a defender of the Pope’s temporal power, in this speech he echoed the words of Count Cavour, who on March 27, 1861 had called for a “Free Church in a Free State” as the best solution to the problem of the temporal power of the Church in the Italian peninsula, and this just six months after he himself had orchestrated the theft of the papal states! Ward was greatly exercised by Montalembert’s speech, for he was convinced that an important theological principle was at stake. He interpreted Montalembert’s theory as a de facto denial that Christendom, that is, the publicly recognized sovereignty of Christ, was the ideal political order from the Catholic point of view. Ward responded in his typical fashion with a deduction from first principles:

The Church professes to be infallible in her teaching of morals no less than of faith. If, then, Catholicism be true, and if Catholics have fullest
ward duly recognized that the public sovereignty of Christ and authority of the Church did not have anything to do with heaven on earth and “that human self-will, pride, and frailty were far from being extinguished, whether in laymen or in ecclesiastics” during Europe’s Catholic centuries. But these centuries did at least strive to put this ideal into practice, and so, he argued, today we should defend those regimes which still recognize the rightful authority of the Church. Ward was no absolutist, and neither was he sympathetic with every Catholic political movement on the continent, but he was knowledgeable about them and used his position as editor of the Dublin Review to keep his fellow English Catholics informed of continental events. When he took over the journal in 1863, he added two new sections to it, one on foreign Catholic periodical literature and another on foreign events of Catholic interest. He did so, as the introductory discourse to the first summary of Catholic events explained, because of his desire to oppose the Revolution, of which he gave a pithy definition: “The Revolution is a political negation of God.”

Newman was certainly no friend of the Italian revolutionaries, whom he called in an 1866 sermon “sacrilegious bandits,” and well-known is this admission in his Letter to the Duke of Norfolk: “No one can dislike the democratic principle more than I do.” But compared to Manning and Ward, Newman tended to be less concerned about the Church in Europe; one senses that having lost the battle to preserve Christendom in England through the Oxford Movement, Newman became convinced that Christendom was in fact dead throughout Europe. Furthermore, he tended to be sympathetic toward liberal Catholics such as Montalembert who wished to see some sort of salutary compromise between the Church and the spirit of the day. In Newman’s view, politics was a prudent matter, practiced under the watchful eye of Eternity, to be sure, but nonetheless a matter in which compromise was necessary. This Ward and Manning also believed, and they were certainly law-abiding subjects of the English crown who pursued domestic politics knowing that compromise was necessary. They differed from Newman, though, in their assessment of the contemporary European political and religious reality. Like Pius IX, both Ward and Manning were actively counter-revolutionary in their assessment of and participation in European politics. They were concerned to defend the rights of the Church, which they believed to be the rights of God, and they were convinced that the civil war of Europe in which they were engaged was a crusade that Catholics—whether in Rome, France, Austria, Spain, or Belgium—had a good chance of winning. Today, historical revision is showing that Catholics did indeed have a good chance of winning, if not in Italy in 1860, then perhaps in France in 1873, where the restoration of a Catholic king was very nearly achieved. Ward and Manning were critical of the dissenting opinions of liberal Catholics such as Montalembert because they understood themselves to be involved in a great struggle for the soul of Europe. Prudence, to them, dictated the importance of a unified Catholic defence of the ideal of Christendom and the principle that the sovereignty of Christ is both private and public.

CATHOLICS AT OXFORD

The second matter on which Newman and the Ultramontanes disagreed was the question of the matriculation of English Catholics at Oxford after 1854. Once again, it was a prudent matter in which reasonable men could disagree and in which Ward and Manning saw important principles at stake principles that Newman either did not see or was not willing to fight for.

In 1854, parliament passed a law opening Oxford degrees to non-Anglicans, including Catholics. Until this time, Catholics could only receive university degrees through examinations at the University of London, for which they would study at one of several Catholic colleges (essentially high schools) scattered around the kingdom. In England, there was no opportunity...
for a residential program of university education for English Catholics. Those few Catholics of sufficient wealth to attend university were almost all members of the recusant aristocracy. As far as they were concerned, Oxford truly belonged to them: after all, it was a Catholic foundation in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and many of them could trace back their families to that same era. Looking to the converts of the Oxford movement, they saw, as Newman said, that Oxford had made them Catholics, which made the University still more attractive. In general, Catholic parents wanted to send their sons there for the social value of the Oxford experience, which was thought to be productive of influential friendships that would help them to move to the center of English political and cultural life. Newman was the object of the hopes of these wealthy Catholic recusants and converts, who longed to see a Catholic hall at Oxford, or at least a Catholic presence there. In 1864, Newman bought five acres in central Oxford on which to build a branch of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri and, eventually, a hall for Catholic students. It was his most fervent desire to return to Oxford, where he thought he would be most useful to the Catholic cause as an educator and a priest.

But the English bishops and Pius IX saw things differently, handing down a decision in 1865 prohibiting Catholic attendance at Oxford on pain of mortal sin. This state of affairs lasted until 1896, six years after Newman’s death, and for the rest of his life his inability to return to Oxford caused him great pain. Both Newman and many historians since have tended to blame Ward and Manning for the decision to prohibit Catholic attendance at Oxford, seeing in this prohibition little more than obscurantism, lack of courage, jealousy of Newman’s influence, and an unhealthy “fortress mentality.”

One may, however, see their opposition to Catholic matriculation at Oxford in a different light. In the first place, Oxford in the 1860s was by no means a place congenial to the Catholic faith. It was at that time still essentially an Anglican seminary, in that the vast majority of students were destined for Holy Orders in the Church of England and a preponderance of the professors were clergy. Moreover, the theological climate of this Anglican seminary was much changed from 1845. The departure of the leading religious reformers, through their conversion to the Catholic Church, had left a vacuum in intellectual leadership that was filled by a growing contingent of skeptical liberals. In 1860, several Oxford dons had contributed to a volume called Essays and Reviews, which brought the so-called “higher criticism” of Holy Scripture before the English public for the first time. This volume of essays caused a great public commotion, and two of the contributors were stripped by the Church of England of their dignity as ministers only to be reinstated by parliament shortly thereafter. Within the High-Church or Anglo-Catholic side of Anglican opinion at Oxford, active opposition to what they called the “Roman Catholic Church” was stronger than it had been in 1845, in large part because those who felt the call to convert already had done so. It was also at this time that the Anglo-Catholic theory of the “three branches” of the Catholic Church Roman, Orthodox, and Anglican-came to the fore. Some English Roman Catholics professing this theory in the hopes of promoting the corporate reunion of the Anglican and Roman Churches were condemned by the Holy Office in 1865. So there were a number of reasons why the English bishops wished to prevent Catholic matriculation at Oxford; moreover, they tended to follow Ward and Manning and Pius IX in their desire to found a Catholic university in England, an undertaking which was thought to be incompatible with the establishment of a Catholic hall at Oxford, so few were the available Catholic students of adequate wealth and education. Furthermore, the Bishops took a dim view of the argument based on the social importance of the Oxford experience, seeing this as worldliness not to be encouraged.

Ward’s and Manning’s opposition to Catholic matriculation at Oxford stemmed in large part from a conception of the end of Catholic education different from that of Newman. Again, it was a question of emphasis. Newman saw the Oxford model of liberal education as a timeless ideal and yearned to have the chance to mold young Catholic minds according to this ideal. Manning and Ward valued liberal education, but they thought Oxford’s version of it insufficiently Catholic. This was because they were radically counter-cultural, seeing English culture as essentially anti-Catholic and authentic Catholic culture as much more likely to be found on the Continent than in England. Manning’s statement on the university question came in an important programmatic essay of 1863 entitled “Works and Wants of the Church in England.” Ward put forward his opinions on the subject the
following year in response to a pamphlet by a layman who argued for the foundation of a Catholic college at Oxford. Between them, these two essays summed up what might be called the cultural mission of the Victorian Ultramontanes, which was to bring home to England the benefits of the pan-European Catholic revival and to stamp out the remaining Gallican or nationalist isolationism among English Catholics.

Ward argued that it was not possible for English Catholics to learn to think and to act like Christians at Oxford because Oxford was the very fountainhead of the national spirit of the English ruling class. This national spirit he thought essentially Protestant and therefore incompatible with the proper spirit of a Catholic. The Catholic aristocracy, it seemed to Ward, wanted to rejoin this ruling class by imbibing its spirit. Ward thought they should instead conform to the spirit of the Church on the Continent and throughout the world, but especially in Rome. The following passage of Ward’s contains both a theoretical statement of great importance and an edifying practical deduction:

In every nation there is a certain subtle, yet most powerful, influence, which we call the national spirit; it is produced partly by national character and partly by long-continued habits of legislation and administration; and it imbues unconsciously the mind of each individual citizen with an indefinite number of notions, regarded by him as self-evident first principles, and as beyond the province of criticism or examination. In like manner, on the Church’s side, there is a Catholic spirit, and there are Catholic instincts, produced partly by the working of Catholic truth on those pious and simple souls who faithfully receive it, and partly by the more direct agency of the Ecclesia Docens; and this circumambient Catholic atmosphere is one of her principal instruments in bringing home to each individual the great truths with which she is intrusted. But these two spirits—the Catholic and the national respectively are very far more antagonistic than harmonious. To the former we cannot resign ourselves too unreservedly, for it is the very effluence of God the Holy Ghost. Towards the prevailing national spirit, on the contrary, our only reasonable attitude is one of deep jealousy and suspicion; because it is charged with principles which, for the corruption of human nature, are sure to be far more false than true, and from which we should keep ourselves entirely free, until we have measured them by their only true standard, the Church’s voice.

From all these points of contrast it follows that we have a far closer corporate connection with a French or Italian Catholic than with an Irish or English Protestant, as such; and, if he be a loyal son of the Church, should have with him a far deeper and wider sympathy. And it also follows, as we have already observed, that we owe a far more unreserved and loyal devotion to the Church than we owe to the State.¹¹

Likewise, Manning argued that English culture was essentially anti-Catholic, except that he saw its dangers precisely in the way in which the active opposition to Catholics was decreasing and the consequent temptation to conform to the surrounding culture was increasing. One copious and manifold source of danger is the anti-Catholic atmosphere the Germans would call it the time-spirit—or the dominant current of thought and action which pervades the age and society in which we are born. No one wholly escapes its influence; most are deeply penetrated with it. We doubt whether it was so dangerous to Catholics before the Emancipation as it is now. In those days the direct action of persecuting laws ground down or bore down the courage of multitudes. But the allurements of English society and English public opinion had little power. They were hostile, harassing, and repulsive. Now they are far more perilous; being bland, insidious, and seducing. Public opinion is Protestant, and Protestantism is formally opposed to the idea of a Church divinely constituted and endowed. The first principles and maxims of Catholic education such as submission to a teaching authority, fear of error, mistrust of our own judgments are extinct. This spirit begins in our schools, pervades our Universities, and animates the whole of English society. We cannot draw breath without inhaling it; and the effect of it is visible upon men who do not suspect themselves of any want of Catholic instincts. It has become unconscious; and what strikes and offends foreign Catholics is hardly, or not at all, perceived by those who are born into this atmosphere.¹²

Ward and Manning both taught that the antidote to the national spirit and its worldliness was to be found in the Catholicity of the Church—in the pan-European Catholic revival which had produced great Catholic
teachers in every major country and above all in Rome. Far from a fortress mentality, their cultural mission, as one might call it, was to convince English Catholics to break out of the parochial culture of England and rejoice in the world-wide and universal culture to be found in the Church. Manning lauded the English seminaries abroad in “Paris, Douai, Lisbon, Valladolid, and Rome,” where English priests had been trained for three centuries before the restoration of seminaries in England—for enabling priests to be preserved from nationalism and for exporting to England “the culture of Spain, Portugal, Italy, and France.” He advocated a separate Catholic university because it could much better participate in the Catholicity of the Church, and suggested that appropriate instructors could be drawn from Catholic nations abroad, “for if Protestantism possesses the culture of England, the culture of other nations is Catholic.” What was wanted in England was not “tame, diluted, timid, or worldly Catholicism,” meant to simulate “the tone of an un-Catholic society.” Rather, Manning suggested, English Catholics should be “downright, masculine, and decided Catholics more Roman than Rome, and more ultramontane than the Pope himself.”

Ward was decidedly in Manning’s camp on the university question. His review of Newman’s *Idea of a University* is still well worth reading for the emphasis he makes therein on the duty of a Catholic education to inculcate positive truths and not merely to assist in the formation of an expansive mind. In his *Discourses on University Education*, Newman had made clear his conviction that theology played a central role in liberal education, but he also argued that a truly liberal education could minister to no end beyond itself: to be liberal, knowledge must be for its own sake. For Newman, the result of a liberal education was a gentleman of expansive intellect who would never willingly cause harm. It was and is a beautiful ideal. But, so far as Ward was concerned, it was not the highest ideal. As Manning had called for Catholics to be “more ultramontane than the Pope,” so Ward expressed his conviction as to the apostolic end of Catholic education in the crusading idiom of the day by invoking the Zouave, the volunteer soldier in Plus IX’s army. Catholic students and teachers, he wrote,

... will surely not be so pusillanimous as to be contented with self-defence. They must assume the aggressive; and aim not merely at holding their own, but at enlarging the Church’s borders. In one word, they must embark seriously on the enterprise of convincing the non-Catholic intellect.

But in these days, as has been so often observed, the Church’s more intellectual enemies care very little about theology. Controversy can only be carried on against them by enforcing Catholic views on philosophy and history; and unless any so-called higher education prepares the rising generation to learn this task, it is but a mockery and a sham. Our educated youths must be animated by a holy anger against the prevalent unbelieving literature and philosophy, similar to that martial zeal which inspired the crusader of the past, which inspires the Zouave of the present.14

Elsewhere he put it somewhat differently: commenting on the “work of zealous Catholics” when faced with Revolution, he remarked that their duty was, “in one word, to meet the revolutionary propaganda by a propaganda of truth.”15

Newman scholars have tended to portray the views of Ward and Manning on contemporary European affairs and the attendance of Catholics at Oxford in a negative light. In so doing, they have obscured the cultural mission that these two Catholic leaders saw before them. In their conversions, they each, for somewhat different reasons, embraced the Catholic Church and Catholic culture with whole-hearted enthusiasm: Ward because of his conviction of the bankruptcy of that which he had left behind, his love for the systematic theology he found in the Catholic fold, and his deep appreciation for the ideal of Christendom and the importance of Catholic culture; Manning for the great sense of the Church that he found in the Catholic priesthood, his personal loyalty to Plus IX, and his conviction that the interests of God needed defending at a particularly tumultuous hour of European history. It is true that the great gifts that John Henry Newman brought to the Church as a theologian were of a higher order than those of Ward or Manning. Nevertheless, we should not let our just veneration for Newman’s legacy obscure the contributions of Ward and Manning, whose crusading zeal as counter-cultural and counter-revolutionary Catholics is as important today in America as it was over a century ago in England.
3 Newman to Acton, March 18, 1864, in Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman, XXI, 84.
5 Newman, Apologia Pro Vita Sua, 16.
10 Ward, “Foreign Events of Catholic Interest,” Dublin Review n.s. 1 (October 1863): 584. Note that Wellesley’s index does not identify the author of these sections. They were presumably written by E. H. Thompson, Ward’s sub-editor at the time. The first of these essays, however, begins with a separate two-page statement explaining their reason for being. I think that this introduction may have been written by Ward, as its rhetoric is similar to his essay on the Syllabus of Errors (Ward, “The Encyclical and the Syllabus,” Dublin Review n.s. 4 (July 1865: 441-499). Cf. The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, 1824-1900, ed. W. E. Houghton (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 2: 71.