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## “LEAD, KINDLY LIGHT. . .”

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IT HAS NOW BEEN ONE HUNDRED YEARS SINCE THE DEATH OF CARDINAL NEWMAN. He was a man of great vision and complexity who caused a storm of controversy in his day and continues to attract us by the power, breadth and beauty of his writing and his enigmatic personality.

He was born in London in 1801. His keen intellect and sensitive temperament were manifested at an early age. His love of Sacred Scripture, the classics and patristic literature led him to Oxford where he became a fellow and eventually a tutor at Oriel College.

Although Newman himself traced the start of what became known as the Oxford Movement to Keble's Assize Sermon on "National Apostasy" (July 14, 1833), he became the guiding spirit of that Movement which began publishing in September of 1833 the Tracts of the Times. On February 27, 1841 Newman issued his now famous "Tract 90: Remarks on Certain Passages in the Thirty-Nine Articles". In this tract he argued for a strong Catholic interpretation of these traditional Protestant articles. This raised a storm of opposition and was condemned by the Anglican hierarchy.

In 1842 he moved to Littlemore and in 1843 he retracted all his anti-Catholic statements. This set the stage for his momentous decision to join the Roman Catholic Church. He was formally received into the Church by the Passionist priest, Bl. Dominic Barberi on October 9, 1845. The following May he was ordained a Catholic priest in Rome. After his return to England, he established his beloved Birmingham Oratory in 1848 and adopted the joyful St. Philip Neri as his spiritual father.

Newman's prodigious writings fill over 25 volumes. In addition to this, he also wrote over 20,000 letters. Among his major works, we must mention his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* which was first published in 1845. This brilliant work of historical theology foreshadowed the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and offers a powerful apologetic for the Catholic vision of how theological development moves naturally and supernaturally from the implicit to the explicit. Newman also offers in the *Essay* a series of tests by which true development can be separated from doctrinal corruptions.

In his *Idea of a University* Newman sets forth his still timely vision of the goals, ideals and the curriculum of an authentic Catholic education. Newman defends the central role of theology in university education. He argues that since the object of all learning is truth, theology, which has for its object the Ultimate Truth, must be established as the center of all higher education. This work grew out of the effort to establish a Catholic university in Ireland as a response to the increasing secularization of the English universities.

When the Anglican clergyman and novelist Charles Kingsley (in the January 1864 issue of "Macmillan's Magazine") reviewed James A. Froude's *History of England*, he used the review as a vehicle to launch a scathing attack upon the Catholic priesthood and Newman in particular as being full of treachery and deceit. This truly was to be a "blessing in disguise". In response to this vicious attack upon the priesthood and his integrity, Newman wrote the *Apologia*

*Pro Vita Sua*. Newman's *Apologia* is among the finest autobiographies written in the English language. It is primarily the story of his spiritual journey in which Newman reveals his inner soul to us.

His final major work to which he had devoted a great deal of his life was the *Essay in the Aid of A Grammar of Assent* which was published in 1870. Although this work is less accessible than his other masterpieces, it is nonetheless an extremely important work in which he sets forth his intensely personal philosophy of religion and theory of knowledge in his analysis of human assent to religious truths.

Newman, throughout his life, was misunderstood by Protestants and his fellow Catholics. His life's achievements were finally crowned however when the farsighted Pope Leo XIII elevated him to the cardinalate in 1879.

John Henry Cardinal Newman truly was a defender of the Faith who spent his life as an opponent of "liberalism in religion". This liberalism promoted a trendy relativism among all religions as if the truth of the Creed meant nothing.

In his sermons, poetry, novels and theological works, Newman left an indelible mark on his times and deeply influenced such great English Catholic writers as Chesterton, Belloc, Waugh and Dawson. This tower of intellectual and spiritual strength was called to his eternal home, his heart's deepest longing, on August 11, 1890. His beautiful poem "The Pillar of the Cloud" captures the spiritual childhood of this mystical, sensitive soul.

Lead, Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom

Lead thou me on!

The night is dark, and I am far from home-

Lead Thou me on!

Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see

The distant scene-one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor pray'd that Thou

Shouldst lead me on.

I loved to choose and see my path, but now

Lead Thou me on!

I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,

Pride ruled my *will*: remember not past years.

So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still

Will lead me on,

O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till

The night is gone;

And with the morn those angel faces smile

Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

We are pleased to offer in thanksgiving to Almighty God for the gift of John Henry Cardinal Newman this series of lectures by a group of outstanding Newman scholars called forth by the inspired leadership of Fr. Raymond Schoder, SJ to whose memory we dedicate this work.

-Timothy T. O'Donnell, S.T.D.