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Illustrated : I, in nine discourses ...

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John Henry Newman



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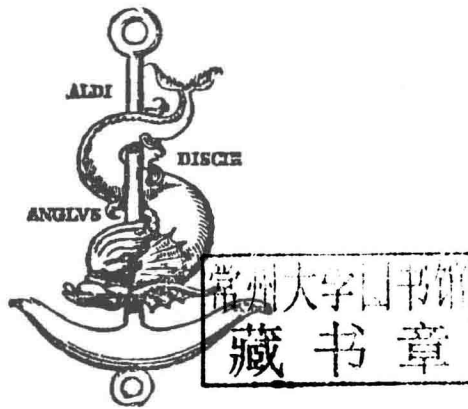
The Idea of a University: Defined and Illustrated : I, in nine discourses ...

THE IDEA OF A UNIVERSITY
DEFINED AND ILLUSTRATED

I. IN NINE DISCOURSES DELIVERED TO THE CATHOLICS OF
DUBLIN

II. IN OCCASIONAL LECTURES AND ESSAYS ADDRESSED TO THE
MEMBERS OF THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

BY
JOHN HENRY NEWMAN, D.D.
OF THE ORATORY



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I.

UNIVERSITY TEACHING

CONSIDERED IN NINE DISCOURSES.

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UNIVERSITY TEACHING

CONSIDERED IN NINE DISCOURSES.

Hospes eram, et collegistis Me.

IN GRATEFUL NEVER-DYING REMEMBRANCE
OF HIS MANY FRIENDS AND BENEFACTORS,
LIVING AND DEAD,
AT HOME AND ABROAD,
IN GREAT BRITAIN, IRELAND, FRANCE,
IN BELGIUM, GERMANY, POLAND, ITALY, AND MALTA,
IN NORTH AMERICA, AND OTHER COUNTRIES,
WHO, BY THEIR RESOLUTE PRAYERS AND PENANCES,
AND BY THEIR GENEROUS STUBBORN EFFORTS,
AND BY THEIR MUNIFICENT ALMS,
HAVE BROKEN FOR HIM THE STRESS
OF A GREAT ANXIETY,
THESE DISCOURSES,
OFFERED TO OUR LADY AND ST. PHILIP ON ITS RISE,
COMPOSED UNDER ITS PRESSURE,
FINISHED ON THE EVE OF ITS TERMINATION,
ARE RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED
BY THE AUTHOR.

IN FÆST. PRÆSENT.

R. M. V.

NOV. 21, 1852.

P R E F A C E .

THE view taken of a University in these Discourses is the following :—That it is a place of *teaching universal knowledge*. This implies that its object is, on the one hand, intellectual, not moral ; and, on the other, that it is the diffusion and extension of knowledge rather than the advancement. If its object were scientific and philosophical discovery, I do not see why a University should have students ; if religious training, I do not see how it can be the seat of literature and science.

Such is a University in its *essence*, and independently of its relation to the Church. But, practically speaking, it cannot fulfil its object duly, such as I have described it, without the Church's assistance ; or, to use the theological term, the Church is necessary for its *integrity*. Not that its main characters are changed by this incorporation : it still has the office of intellectual education ; but the Church steadies it in the performance of that office.

Such are the main principles of the Discourses which follow ; though it would be unreasonable for me to expect that I have treated so large and important a field of thought with the fulness and precision necessary to secure me from incidental misconceptions of my meaning on the part of the reader. It is true, there is nothing

novel or singular in the argument which I have been pursuing, but this does not protect me from such misconceptions; for the very circumstance that the views I have been delineating are not original with me may lead to false notions as to my relations in opinion towards those from whom I happened in the first instance to learn them, and may cause me to be interpreted by the objects or sentiments of schools to which I should be simply opposed.

For instance, some persons may be tempted to complain, that I have servilely followed the English idea of a University, to the disparagement of that Knowledge which I profess to be so strenuously upholding; and they may anticipate that an academical system, formed upon my model, will result in nothing better or higher than in the production of that antiquated variety of human nature and remnant of feudalism, as they consider it, called "a gentleman."* Now, I have anticipated this charge in various parts of my discussion; if, however, any Catholic is found to prefer it (and to Catholics of course this Volume is primarily addressed), I would have him first of all ask himself the previous question, *what* he conceives to be the reason contemplated by the Holy See in recommending just now to the Irish Hierarchy the establishment of a Catholic University? Has the Supreme Pontiff recommended it for the sake of the Sciences, which are to be the matter, or rather of the Students, who are to be the subjects, of its teaching? Has he any obligation or duty at all towards secular knowledge as such? Would it become his Apostolical Ministry, and his descent from the Fisherman, to have a zeal for the Baconian or other philosophy of man for its

* *Vid.* Huber's English Universities, London, 1843, vol. ii., part 1, pp. 321, etc.

own sake? Is the Vicar of Christ bound by office or by vow to be the preacher of the theory of gravitation, or a martyr for electro-magnetism? Would he be acquitting himself of the dispensation committed to him if he were smitten with an abstract love of these matters, however true, or beautiful, or ingenious, or useful? Or rather, does he not contemplate such achievements of the intellect, as far as he contemplates them, solely and simply in their relation to the interests of Revealed Truth? Surely, what he does he does for the sake of Religion; if he looks with satisfaction on strong temporal governments, which promise perpetuity, it is for the sake of Religion; and if he encourages and patronizes art and science, it is for the sake of Religion. He rejoices in the widest and most philosophical systems of intellectual education, from an intimate conviction that Truth is his real ally, as it is his profession; and that Knowledge and Reason are sure ministers to Faith.

This being undeniable, it is plain that, when he suggests to the Irish Hierarchy the establishment of a University, his first and chief and direct object is, not science, art, professional skill, literature, the discovery of knowledge, but some benefit or other, to accrue, by means of literature and science, to his own children; not indeed their formation on any narrow or fantastic type, as, for instance, that of an "English Gentleman" may be called, but their exercise and growth in certain habits, moral or intellectual. Nothing short of this can be his aim, if, as becomes the Successor of the Apostles, he is to be able to say with St. Paul, "Non judicavi me scire aliquid inter vos, nisi Jesum Christum, et hunc crucifixum." Just as a commander wishes to have tall and well-formed and vigorous soldiers, not from any abstract devotion to the military standard of height or age, but for the purposes

of war, and no one thinks it any thing but natural and praiseworthy in him to be contemplating, not abstract qualities, but his own living and breathing men ; so, in like manner, when the Church founds a University, she is not cherishing talent, genius, or knowledge, for their own sake, but for the sake of her children, with a view to their spiritual welfare and their religious influence and usefulness, with the object of training them to fill their respective posts in life better, and of making them more intelligent, capable, active members of society.

Nor can it justly be said that in thus acting she sacrifices Science, and, under a pretence of fulfilling the duties of her mission, perverts a University to ends not its own, as soon as it is taken into account that there are other institutions far more suited to act as instruments of stimulating philosophical inquiry, and extending the boundaries of our knowledge, than a University. Such, for instance, are the literary and scientific "Academies," which are so celebrated in Italy and France, and which have frequently been connected with Universities, as committees, or, as it were, congregations or delegacies subordinate to them. Thus the present Royal Society originated in Charles the Second's time, in Oxford ; such just now are the Ashmolean and Architectural Societies in the same seat of learning, which have risen in our own time. Such, too, is the British Association, a migratory body, which at least at times is found in the halls of the Protestant Universities of the United Kingdom, and the faults of which lie, not in its exclusive devotion to science, but in graver matters which it is irrelevant here to enter upon. Such again is the Antiquarian Society, the Royal Academy for the Fine Arts, and others which might be mentioned. This, then, is the sort of institution, which primarily contemplates Science itself, and not students ;

and, in thus speaking, I am saying nothing of my own, being supported by no less an authority than Cardinal Gerdil. "Ce n'est pas," he says, "qu'il y ait aucune véritable opposition entre l'esprit des Académies et celui des Universités; ce sont seulement des vues différentes. Les Universités sont établies pour *enseigner* les sciences *aux élèves* qui veulent s'y former; les Académies se proposent *de nouvelles recherches* à faire dans la carrière des sciences. Les Universités d'Italie ont fourni des sujets qui ont fait honneur aux Académies; et celles-ci ont donné aux Universités des Professeurs, qui ont rempli les chaires avec là plus grande distinction."*

The nature of the case and the history of philosophy combine to recommend to us this division of intellectual labour between Academies and Universities. To discover and to teach are distinct functions; they are also distinct gifts, and are not commonly found united in the same person. He, too, who spends his day in dispensing his existing knowledge to all comers is unlikely to have either leisure or energy to acquire new. The common sense of mankind has associated the search after truth with seclusion and quiet. The greatest thinkers have been too intent on their subject to admit of interruption; they have been men of absent minds and idiosyncratic habits, and have, more or less, shunned the lecture room and the public school. Pythagoras, the light of Magna Græcia, lived for a time in a cave. Thales, the light of Ionia, lived unmarried and in private, and refused the invitations of princes. Plato withdrew from Athens to the groves of Academus. Aristotle gave twenty years to a studious discipleship under him. Friar Bacon lived in his tower upon the Isis. Newton indulged in an intense severity of meditation which almost shook his reason.

* Opere, t. iii, p. 353.