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Newman and Escrivá: Two Distinguished Educators

The encyclical letter, *Faith and Reason*, explains the complementary nature of two forms of knowledge, philosophy and theology based on their shared source of truth. Almost from the inception of Christianity this notion was sustained by noted Catholic thinkers. Among the authors that the encyclical credits for this understanding of knowledge and truth are Clement of Alexandria, Origen, the Cappadocian Fathers, Dyonisius, St. Augustine, St. Anselm, St. Albert the Great and St. Thomas Aquinas. The latter two recognized the rightful autonomy that philosophy has, but from the late medieval period onward the legitimate distinction between philosophy and theology became “more and more a fateful separation”¹. During the 19th century, the exaggerated rationalism of some thinkers made philosophy and natural sciences almost completely independent from the contents of faith. In turn some theologians reacted with *fideism*, a mistrust of reason and man’s natural capacity to know God².

At the turn of the 19th century, a deep separation between faith and reason was readily perceptible in the poor religious instruction of the undergraduates at Oxford and in their perfunctory practices of piety. Secularization increased at this university, and by mid-century, its colleges widely adopted philosophical idealism and an unchecked acceptance of the historical-critical method of biblical criticism³. John Henry Newman, then a young tutor at Oriel College, advocated a spiritual and moral renewal that later became a doctrinal reform movement. He was a proponent of a theology in line with the tradition of *fidem quarens intellectum* and therefore is also recognized in the encyclical *Faith and Reason*⁴.

¹ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Faith and Reason*, St. Paul’s Books Media, Boston, 1998, n. 45, p. 61.

² *Idem*.

³ See Christopher O. Blum, “Newman and the Ultramontanes” in *Faith & Reason*, Vol XXVI, No. 2, Summer 2001, p. 178.

⁴ See *Faith and Reason*, n. 74. In the Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, John Paul II quotes a passage of Newman on the relationship between reason and faith. See *On Catholic Universities*, St. Paul Books & Media, Boston, 1990, n. 4, p. 9.

A century later Fr. Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, a young diocesan priest, became the center of another spiritual renewal in Madrid. As a university chaplain he challenged students to study their faith and to put it into practice in their ordinary lives⁵. During the second and third quarters of the century, he taught many students and professors to lead their lives in a manner coherent with their faith and to pursue, as Christians, their intellectual careers. Both these exceptionally well educated men fought the post-Enlightenment attempt of excluding faith and theology from university education and public life.

These men lived in very different periods of history and cultural environments, the first, in 19th century Victorian England and the second, in 20th century Spain and Italy. Newman was a convert from Anglicanism and formerly from Calvinism. Escrivá was born to a pious family with a very long tradition of orthodox Catholicism. The Oxford don was a university tutor, a reformer and a dedicated scholar. The Aragonese priest was foremost a preacher, confessor and spiritual guide. The first became cardinal and one of the two leading figures of late 20th century English Catholicism. He was declared venerable by Pope John Paul II on January 21, 1991. The second was appointed Monsignor, and even without further promotion in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, he exercised considerable moral and spiritual influence on many bishops⁶. He was canonized by Pope John Paul II on October 6, 2002.

However, there are some notable similarities in their lives that I would like to highlight. In addition to their holiness of life, both exerted a significant impact on university education and apostolic work among intellectuals. To begin, each established a university that gave prominence to a liberal arts education and to the integrated “circle of knowledge” and its relation with theology⁷. Both educators stressed the important role of

⁵ From the late 1930's until the mid 1940's, Fr. Escrivá made trips to Valencia, Valladolid, Zaragoza, Barcelona and other Spanish cities for the sole purpose of meeting with university students to instill in them a sense of their Christian mission in society.

⁶ Many bishops would visit him to ask for advice and assistance. In addition, under Pius XII and John XXIII he served in various organisms of the Holy See, Peter Berglar, *Opus Dei: vida y obra del Fundador Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer*, Ediciones Rialp, Madrid, 1988, p. 251.

⁷ Escrivá expressed this in the following terms: “[T]he study of religion is a fundamental need: a man who lacks religious training is a man whose education is incomplete...A university from which religion is

tutors in residential colleges for the development of friendship and virtuous lives⁸. With a secular mentality and a “good anti-clericalism”, a phrase often used by Escrivá, both were instrumental in promoting the participation of laity in university education as well as in the moral affairs of civil life. In this article I suggest that both were great Christian educators, and I will outline how they have individually made a lasting contribution to the cause of university education.

John Henry Newman converted to Catholicism after much prayer and a thorough study of the complex and painful events of early Church History, first, Arianism and, later, Donatism. For some years he tried to defend the Anglican Church as a *via media* within the Branch Theory according to which the Catholic Church has three branches, the Roman, the Orthodox and the Anglican. Notwithstanding, his reading of the Church Fathers led him to earnestly seek the Church that held the truths espoused by Athanasius of Alexandria and Ambrose of Milan. Newman resigned his teaching post and spent three years at Littlemore, a very austere home near Oxford, where he lived a monastic life style with some of his closest friends.

In the end, his study of doctrinal development concerning papal authority, baptism, purgatory, and devotion to the saints convinced him to enter the “True Fold of Christ”⁹. This historical analysis of the development of dogma titled *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* was the final impetus for his conversion. On October 9, 1854, three days after completing the *Essay*, Newman made a sacramental confession and was received into the Church by Fr. Domenic Barberi, now Blessed Barberi.

Newman had written scholarly books on various subjects, including the Arians, Justification and the “Offices of the Church”; he had also translated Athanasius’ *On the*

absent is an incomplete university”, Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, *Conversations with Monsignor Escrivá de Balaguer*, “The University at the Service of contemporary society”, interview with Andrés Garrigó, Ecclesia Press, 1968, nn. 73, p. 89.

⁸ John Henry Newman, *Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Henry Tristram, Sheed & Ward, New York, 1957, pp. 89-96. On a visit to Oxford, Msgr. Escrivá manifested a marked interest in the residential colleges and their tutorial system.

⁹ Newman understood the Roman Catholic Church to be the “True Fold” and often referred to it as such in letters regarding his own conversion as well as in letters to people considering conversion. See Stanley L. Jaki, *Newman to Converts, An existential Ecclesiology*, Real View Books, Pinckney, 2001, pp. 29-52.

Incarnation. His study of Church history, theology and philosophy would continue. He would always remain a university man and a teacher. In the fall of 1846, he arrived in Rome with his friend Ambrose St. John to study for ordination to the priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church. There Newman joined the Congregation of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri and was named superior for an Oratory that he would establish upon his return to England. In Rome he was kindly greeted by Pope Pius IX, also now Blessed, who afterwards sent him a silver crucifix as a gift. The same pope made Newman a doctor of Divinity in 1851 after he delivered the lectures titled *The Difficulties of Anglicans*.

That same year, Newman was asked by Paul Cullen, Archbishop of Armagh and, later, Dublin, to establish a Catholic University in Ireland¹⁰. Newman took on this complex and arduous project although he had more than enough work preparing the move of the Birmingham Oratory of St. Philip Neri to Edgbaston, just outside the same city, and settling conflicts with the then, also newly established, London Oratory. At the same time, he was under trial for an unjust accusation of libel. Newman described himself as an ‘Englishman opening and running a university in Ireland’. Newman’s obstacles were aggravated by significant nationalist fervor against the English government’s response to the Irish potato famine (1845-1851)¹¹.

Archbishop Cullen’s petition also included a request for Newman to give some lectures in Dublin on the subject of education. After a painstaking effort by Newman the end result was a masterly series of ten lectures on the nature and scope of a university education. Though only a few of these lectures were actually delivered in the late Spring of 1852, they were all later published together with other lectures and essays, in a book known as *The Idea of a University*.

¹⁰ See *Autobiographical Writings*, pp. 280-285.

¹¹ Repeated failure of the potato crop led to death from starvation and disease. In 1845, the response of the government under Robert Peel consisted in food relief, public works and the repeal of Corn Laws. However, the potato failure worsened and, despite relief efforts, a new Whig government made important policy mistakes. See Geraóid Ó Tuathaigh, *Ireland before the Famine 1798-1848*, The Gill History of Ireland, vol. 9, Gil & MacMillan, Dublin 1972, pp. 203-221.

Providing English or Irish Catholics with a university education was difficult for various social and religious reasons. Only after the Civil emancipation of 1829 were Catholics allowed, once more, to study at Oxford and Cambridge¹². However, at that time, and later under the restored hierarchy in 1850, they were not allowed by the bishops who feared that the anti-Catholic environment of those institutions would cause students to lose their faith. In Ireland, the only university until 1845 was the Anglican Trinity College, whereas originally, all English and Irish universities had been Catholic. That year Sir Robert Peel, the English Prime Minister, put into action a plan for “mixed education” in Ireland. This strategy had been implemented in elementary schools some years earlier and was an attempt to alleviate the prejudices towards Catholics in higher education.

Peel’s plan ordered the creation of three “Queen’s” colleges in Belfast, Cork and Limerick. This political scheme, which was initially received with varying opinions by the Irish Bishops, was finally condemned in 1850 by the same bishops under the advice of Pius IX, who realized the harmful effect of religious indifference inherent to the proposed “mixed education”¹³. Instead he urged that a Catholic university be established in Ireland on the model of Louvain in Belgium. Newman, who was moved by a deep awareness of the grave necessity for educated Catholics, both in England and Ireland, accepted the project of founding the university.

A Catholic university committee was appointed, and in late 1851, Newman was designated president of the new university, but overcoming the resistance of some bishops and laity to a Catholic university and making the actual preparations for its opening took a long time and a great deal of effort¹⁴. In May of 1854, a synod of Irish bishops finally approved the university’s statutes and formally recognized Newman as rector. The university opened on November 4, 1854 with twenty students in residence¹⁵.

¹² José Morales Marín, *Newman (1801-1890)*, Ediciones Rialp, Madrid, 1990, pp. 209-224.

¹³ Geraóid Ó Tuathaigh, p. 202.

¹⁴ Daniel Murray, Archbishop of Dublin, who was opposed to the plans for a Catholic university died in 1852. See *Autobiographical Writings*, p. 284.

¹⁵ Newman did not intend the university to be open for wealthier classes only, and in fact he sought scholarships for students of poor means. However, he criticized the bias of his friend David Moriarity, bishop of Kerry, who was primarily “looking about for poor scholars, cheap lodging houses, and schools

The rector devoted all his energy to drawing up plans of study, finding, appointing and counseling faculty, and procuring funds to pay their salaries. He invested some of his own money to purchase and renovate buildings; and undertook the exacting project of constructing a university Church, providing himself the original funds¹⁶.

Over the years, Newman continued to face strong opposition because of his desire to bring talented English professors to Dublin¹⁷. His plans to appoint laymen to fill the professional chairs and to assume positions of leadership and finance in the university were also thwarted¹⁸. Concerned with pressing responsibilities at the Birmingham Oratory and increasingly upset by the restrictions imposed on his work, he finally resigned his position in 1858. Newman had spent seven years of his life in the service of the university and, according to his calculations, had crossed St. George's Channel 56 times¹⁹. Newman had in mind the idea of a Catholic hall or college in Oxford and admitted that he would "far rather do good to English Catholics in Oxford than in Dublin"²⁰. Nonetheless his trips to Dublin, hard work and correspondence concerning university affairs, from the smallest to the weightiest matters, testify that his heart and energy had been expended in a larger cause, the education of all Catholics.

The Idea of a University remains an inspiring guide for university education for persons of all religious faiths. For Newman, the immediate end of university studies is the pursuit of knowledge whose object is the truth. This knowledge, in turn, can affect the moral education of men. In *The Idea*, Newman presents Aristotelian ideas that he had

for affiliations". *Letters and Diaries*, ed. Charles Stephen Dessain, Thomas Nelson Ltd., London, Vol. XVII, 1967, p. 386, "Letter to John Wallis", September 23, 1856. On the whole Newman misunderstood the clergy as been antagonistic to Catholics of upper or middle classes.

¹⁶ Ian Kerr, *John Henry Newman, A Biography*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990, pp. 376-462.

¹⁷ The possibility of English Catholics going to Oxford concerned him because in the event they did, the nascent Irish university would find it hard to enlist not only rectors and professors, but students as well. Irish Catholics would also wish to attend Oxford. See John Henry Newman, *Letters and Diaries*, Vol. XVII, , pp. 178-179, "Letter to Thomas Grant", Bishop of Southwark, March 7, 1856.

¹⁸ Newman wrote to Moriarty that the rector should link the hierarchy and the university. This would require a bishop and an Irishman, and that person was Moriarty, *ibid*, p. 460, "Letter to David Moriarty", November 25, 1856. His friend replied that "The Rector of a University should be a literary man", which he was not., p. 461, "Letter to John Henry Newman, November 28, 1856.

¹⁹ *Autobiographical Writings*, p. 333.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 178. William George Ward and Henry Edward Manning, Bishop of Westminster, who opposed the idea of Catholics studying at Oxford, considered the spirit of Oxford to be that of the ruling skeptical liberal Protestants. They looked to the Continent for a Pan-European Catholic Revival. See Christopher O. Blum, "Newman and the Ultramontanes" in *Faith & Reason*, Vol XXVI, No. 2, Summer 2001 pp. 178-180.

often considered at Oxford. From these, he drew the distinction between liberal and useful knowledge, and insisted on the role of a university in helping its students acquire knowledge of principles and relations, rather than knowledge of mere facts²¹. One of the main arguments advanced by Newman in Discourses II-IV is the Aristotelian notion of knowledge as a whole. In this “whole”, or “circle of knowledge”, theology, like all sciences, has a bearing; if it is omitted other sciences will try to fill its gap. He summarized this notion as follows:

“I have...laid down first, that all branches of knowledge are, at least implicitly, the subject-matter of its teaching; that these branches are not isolated and independent of one another, but form together a whole or a system; that they run into each other, and complete each other, and that, in proportion to our view of them as a whole, is the exactness and trustworthiness of the knowledge which they separately convey...”²².

In the same paragraph, Newman defines “Liberal Knowledge” and identifies another of the important arguments of *The Idea*, that knowledge is an end in itself. The immediate end of university education is the cultivation of the intellect for the attainment of the truth (Disc. V-VIII). As Martin J. Svaglic explains, the backdrop to this was the 1808-1811 attack on the classical education at Oxford by the *Edinburgh Review*. The Oriel Fellows, Edward Copleston and John Davison, had then responded to this assault. Newman followed suit by upholding the same education, and argued that the direct end of a university is knowledge. Indirectly, it is a great good for secular society and can be a service to the Church. In Newman’s own words:

“[T]hat the process of imparting knowledge to the intellect in this philosophical way is its true culture; that such culture is a good in itself; that the knowledge which is both its instrument and result is called Liberal Knowledge; that such culture, together with the knowledge which effects it, may fitly be sought for its own sake; that it is, however, in addition, of great secular utility, as constituting the best and highest function of the

²¹ See John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University*, Introduction and notes by Martin J. Svaglic, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, 1982, Disc. IX, pp. 161-181.

²² *The Idea of a University*, Disc. IX, 1, p. 162.

intellect for social and political life, and lastly, that, considered in a religious aspect, it concurs with Christianity in a certain way, and then diverges from it; and consequently proves in the event, sometimes its serviceable ally, sometimes, from its very resemblance to it, an insidious and dangerous foe”²³.

The practical consequences for society of a liberal education were not a mere figure of speech. In 1855, Newman began a medical school at the Catholic University of Ireland²⁴. This was undoubtedly a real and concrete example of the connection between “Liberal Knowledge” and service to suffering mankind. As rector of the university, he fostered this harmony between science and art, study and service. He promoted the arts as well as the sciences and broadened the curriculum to include modern subjects not offered at Oxford²⁵. The establishment of the faculty of medicine meant that Newman sacrificed his own scholarly pursuits and, in words of Svaglic, the Horatian love of mere “tranquility, security, a life among friends, and among books, untroubled by business cares-the life of an Epicurean in fact”²⁶.

Almost a hundred years after the founding of the Catholic University of Ireland, Msgr. Josemaría Escrivá was to establish the University of Navarre. The early history of such a young institution has only recently begun to be documented. The origins must be traced to St. Josemaría’s own university education in Zaragoza and Madrid where he developed a vision of a Christian transformation of culture and society based on the work of countless professors imbued with Christian spirit. Defying shortage of time and lack of money, Escrivá himself studied law while he gained his licentiate in theology, and later

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ In support of the university, Newman pointed out to his friend Henry Wilberforce that Oxford and Cambridge had no medical school. *Letters and Diaries*, Vol. XVII, p. 186, “Letter to Henry Wilberforce”, March 13, 1856. At this time Dublin had three world figures in medicine, Robert James Graves, William Stokes and Dominic Joseph Corrigan. The three, whose names are associated to diseases in the medical literature, adopted a new method of teaching whereby the medical students went to the bedside of the patients. See F.O.C. Meenan, *Cecilia St: The Catholic University School of Medicine, 1855-1931*, Gill & MacMillan, Dublin 1987, pp. 4-5.

²⁵ Introduction to *The Idea of a University*, Martin J. Svaglic, p. xiii.

²⁶ *Ibid*, Svaglic, p. xxiii.

he obtained doctoral degrees in both²⁷. For a few years, he taught Roman law and the fundamentals of canon law at private schools²⁸.

Although Escrivá was a very talented young priest, he gave up the pursuit of an ecclesiastical career and his interest in academic life to dedicate himself completely to starting *Opus Dei*, the plan that God revealed to him in 1928. Escrivá was well suited to teach others the message of *Opus Dei*, namely, to sanctify daily work as children of God; he had been raised in a pious, cheerful and hard working family. An underlying theme of the sanctification of ordinary work was summed up in one of his favorite prayers, the aspiration: *Regnare Christum volumus* (We wish Christ to reign). St. Josemaría repeated this prayer looking for ways to make Christ known in a world dominated by religious ignorance and often by outright hatred for the Catholic Church. From a distance, he had observed the persecution of Catholics in Mexico, inspired by Masonic circles, and personally witnessed an even worse bloodbath, instigated by atheist anarchism and Soviet communism in his own country.

Late 19th century Spain had witnessed a decline in the religious alliance between Church and Monarchy. Political revolutions and a capitalistic economy brought urbanization and industrialization with its attendant social upheavals and religious indifference. Spain underwent a de-Christianization that manifested itself in a lack of religious observance and a pervasiveness of religious ignorance and indifference, especially among impoverished city workers and Southern farmers²⁹. Socialism and anarchism replaced the religiosity of many slum dwellers and rural farmers in the South.

The growing separation between anarchists, socialist workers and Catholics ended in the violent and destructive years of the Civil War. General Franco, initially praised by

²⁷ Escrivá received a doctorate in Law from the University of Madrid in December 1939 and a doctorate in Theology from the Lateran University in Rome in December 1955.

²⁸ Andrés Vázquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei, The life of Josemaría Escrivá*, Scepter Publishers, Princeton, 2001, Vol. 1, p. 201. First he taught at the Amado Institute in Zaragoza, and later at the Cicuéndez Academy in Madrid.

²⁹ In 1936 Fr. Ramón Sarabia, a priest who preached missions throughout Spain between 1902-1936 contested the rose legend of Spanish Catholicism in a book titled: *España... es Católica? Charlas de un misionero* (Spain... is it still Catholic? talks by a missionary), see William J. Callahan, *The Catholic Church in Spain: 1875-1998*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C., 2000, p. 240.

the hierarchy, attempted to rebuild Spanish society along the idea of a National Catholicism with rigorous state control³⁰. Some members of the Spanish hierarchy, such as the Bishop of Toledo and cardinal primate, Enrique Pla y Deniel, and the Bishop of Malaga, Angel Herrera, repeatedly fought Franco's regime trying to obtain freedom of the press, workers' rights, and the rights of the Church in higher education. They did this through their pastoral statements and by their support of the influential Spanish association of youth called "Catholic Action" that worked to educate youth and workers in the social teaching of the Church³¹

Although Msgr. Escrivá did not take part in Catholic Action because of his desire to safeguard the political freedom of the members of Opus Dei³², he too stressed the spiritual and intellectual formation of university youths. He realized that intellectuals and professionals would play an important role in the re-Christianization of society, not only in Spain, but also throughout the world. He began by carefully outlining a program for the intellectual preparation of the three men who would become the first priests of Opus Dei. In the early 1940's, he arranged for distinguished Spanish professors in ecclesiastical studies to teach them in Madrid.

St. Josemaría inspired many of his young followers to invest hours of hard work into their studies. He encouraged them to excel and obtain doctorates in their respective fields, and to attain university appointments. Among the first to do this were Jose María Albareda, a chemist and pharmacologist³³, and Jose María Gonzalez Barredo, a professor of physics. He commissioned Albareda, Amadeo de Fuenmayor, a young professor of canon law, and Ismael Sánchez Bella, a professor of civil law, to establish the *Studium generale* of Navarre with Professor Sánchez Bella as its first director³⁴.

³⁰ See William J. Callahan, pp. 400-411 and ch. XVI "The Façade of National Catholicism, 1954-1960, pp. 412-439.

³¹ William J. Callahan, pp. 401-402.

³² See Peter Berglar, *Opus Dei: vida y obra del Fundador Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer*, Ediciones Rialp, Madrid, 1988, pp. 231-233.

³³ *Ibid*, pp. 161-165.

³⁴ On the foundation of the University of Navarre, see Ana Sastre, *Tiempo de Caminar*, Ediciones Rialp, Madrid, 1989, pp. 417-425.

Since the early 1940's, the Spanish parliament had debated the question of allowing the Church to run universities; all state universities were considered to be Catholic. From 1951 to 1956, the Spanish secretary of education, Joaquín Ruiz Giménez, endorsed by Catholic Action, attempted a liberalization of universities and intellectual life and restored some exiled university professors to their chairs. Under the uproar and dissent from the conservative opposition, Franco dismissed him despite the protests of some of Spain's bishops. At this time, less than a dozen universities existed in Spain. There were only a few universities run by institutions of the Catholic Church, such as the two Jesuit universities, Comillas and Deusto (re-opened respectively in 1937 and 1940), the Pontifical University of Salamanca, (re-opened in 1940), and a university college at El Escorial, under the Augustinians (re-opened in 1945)³⁵. The government impeded an elaborate plan to consolidate Deusto and the college at El Escorial into a great Catholic University.

On October 17, 1952, the college that would become the University of Navarre was inaugurated in the old city of Pamplona, Spain. The first event was a celebration of the Mass of the Holy Spirit; the first group was composed of forty-one students. Escrivá personally encouraged the administrators and professors and closely followed the progress of this teaching institution with frequent visits from Rome. The college was recognized as a university by the Spanish government in 1962, and Albareda became its first president. Since that time the university has become academically recognized in Spain and has contributed significantly to the beginning of some institutions of higher education in other countries. Under the guidance of Msgr. Escrivá and later his successors, lay members of Opus Dei have begun centers for higher education in Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Argentina, Chile, Philippines, Italy, Kenya, Nigeria, Uruguay, Ecuador and Guatemala.

The ideal of the University of Navarre went beyond the objective of merely providing its students with a moral and social environment favorable to their study as

³⁵ See Vicente Faubell Zapata, "Universidades pontificias, católicas, institutos superiores de enseñanza de la Iglesia española" in Bernabé Bartolomé, *Historia de la acción educadora de la Iglesia en España*, BAC, Madrid, 1996, vol. II, pp. 492-511.

Catholics. The mission foreseen by Escrivá was the peaceful and unbiased integration of the student's faith into their studies. As a result of this integral formation as Christians, the students would exert a positive influence on their entire social environment³⁶.

Faculties of theology, philosophy and canon law would also be established; and research would be encouraged in these areas as well as in the civil faculties.

Alvaro d'Ors, professor of Roman law at Navarre, later explained that the university was not conceived to compete with the state universities³⁷, but as an institution that would collaborate with them in society towards promoting the sanctification of university work³⁸. Escrivá established university halls, or *colegios mayores*, in many cities in order to complete the educational work carried out in state institutions of higher education³⁹. These halls would offer an environment that fostered model character formation of young men and women who would later provide outstanding contributions to their society.

Escrivá, like Newman, wrote and preached many sermons, but unlike Newman, he did not publish a work on university education. However, he did deliver a number of university discourses on the occasion of the conferment of *honoris causa* degrees at the University of Navarre that could easily constitute an outline for a book that he wished to write⁴⁰. The study of his thought on university education will require the complete publication of his letters, discourses and works as well as scholarship on other aspects of his life. It is fair, however, to note that one of his contributions to university education was the promotion of the ideal of “unity of life”, of which he frequently spoke⁴¹. This concept is explained in his homily “*Passionately Loving the World*” delivered on the university campus on October 8, 1967:

³⁶ Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, *Conversations with Monsignor Escrivá de Balaguer*, “The University at the Service of contemporary society”, interview with Andrés Garrigó, Ecclesia Press, 1968, nn. 73-74, pp. 89-90.

³⁷ At the same time, it was clear from the start that this university would not follow the confessional model of state universities advanced by supporters of a national Catholicism under Franco or that of a national Catholic University as envisioned by the Archbishop of Valencia, Marcelino Olaechea, who was a good friend of Msgr. Escrivá and had been bishop of Pamplona, see Peter Berglar, pp. 341-343.

³⁸ See *Conversations with Monsignor Escrivá de Balaguer*, n. 82, p. 96.

³⁹ *Homenaje a Monseñor Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer*, Eunsa, Pamplona, 1986, pp. 135-138.

⁴⁰ See *Conversations with Monsignor Escrivá de Balaguer*, n. 85, p. 99.

“I often said to university students and workers who were with me in the thirties that they had to know how to *materialize* their spiritual life. I wanted to keep them from the temptation, so common then and now, of living a kind of double life. On one side, an interior life, a life of relation with God; and on the other, a separate and distinct professional, social and family life, full of small earthly realities. No! We cannot lead a double life. We cannot be like schizophrenics, if we want to be Christians”⁴².

His teaching was ascetical rather than academic. He was primarily concerned with helping students to make their faith operative in a down to earth way that he referred to as “Christian materialism” by contrast to Christian spiritualism or Marxist materialism. For him, a Christian must look at the material reality of work as a good and noble task ordered by God from the beginning of creation. After original sin and the Incarnation, it becomes an occasion to co-redeem with Christ. The model for all men and women is the so-called “hidden” and yet “luminous work” carried out by Jesus Christ. The Incarnation of the Son of God sheds great light on the worth of human endeavors done in conformity to God’s will. In addition, Fr. Escrivá taught others to find in the lives of St. Joseph and the Virgin Mary inspiration for holiness in the ordinary activities of everyday life.

Addressing the same group of students and professionals he added: “I assure you, my sons, that when a Christian carries out with love the most insignificant everyday action, this action overflows with the transcendence of God. That is why I have told you repeatedly, and hammered away once and again on the idea, that the Christian vocation consists in making heroic verse out of the prose of each day”⁴³.

In a manner that still rings out as contrasting with accepted canons, he explained that university studies and teaching are not something foreign to a Christian’s spiritual life. St. Josemaría Escrivá described an equivalence between study and prayer that is unique in its 20th century formulation, namely, “An hour of study, for a modern apostle,

⁴¹ For a general description of this term coined by Escrivá, see Pedro Rodríguez, Fernando Ocariz, José Luis Illanes, *Opus Dei in the Church*, Scepter Publishers, Princeton, pp. 142-147.

⁴² Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, *Conversations with Monsignor Escrivá de Balaguer*, Homily “Passionately Loving the World”, n 114, p. 138.

⁴³ *Ibid*, n. 115, p. 139.

is an hour of prayer”⁴⁴. Study well done is the ordinary way for a student to serve God; it is his “professional work”. Study can and should be work presented to God as a pleasing offering. Through their university work, students should try to bridge the artificial gap established between science and religion. Similarly, Escrivá encouraged university professors to understand the greatness of their vocation as teachers, and their responsibility.

Almost in the footsteps of Newman, Escrivá established a medical school at the university he started. This school began just two years after the foundation of the University of Navarre. He encouraged Dr. Juan Jiménez Vargas, one of the first members of Opus Dei, to direct this enterprise, and followed the first steps of the school. Soon afterwards, Escrivá engaged Dr. Eduardo Ortiz de Landazuri, a married member of Opus Dei, who was then a prestigious professor and vice-president of the University of Granada, to assist Jiménez Vargas in starting the university hospital. Mgr. Escrivá urged them to see and serve Christ in their patients at the same time that they taught medicine and carried out scientific research. They were to turn their profession into a generous daily service to men performed from a true love for God⁴⁵.

Some of the salient ideas in his preaching that refer to higher education address the following subjects⁴⁶: love for the Truth, respect for the freedom of students’ consciences, the legitimate autonomy of sciences, the Church’s need for Christians to study and defend from their respective fields the truths of faith, university knowledge as a service to society, honesty in scientific pursuits and a spirituality of work.

One of Escrivá’s pupils, Professor Alejandro Llano, describes the reason for the failure of other academic projects: “We are seeing the failure of the academic programs of the Enlightenment, which tried to join fields of knowledge on the basis of a cold objectivity that was supposedly neutral, setting aside any love of truth. The opposition between love and knowledge, as if they were respectively the irrational and rational, is a

⁴⁴ *The Way*, Josemaría Escrivá, Scepter Press, New York, 1979, n. 335.

⁴⁵ See Ana Sastre, p. 422.

⁴⁶ *Conversations with Monsignor Escrivá*, nn. 73-86, pp. 89-100.

dialectical distortion which ends up by reducing love to physical desire and knowledge to trivial curiosity that is hidden beneath the hopeless optimism of purposeless erudition. In reality, however, love is the source of all knowledge and the innermost energy which nourishes a community of research and teaching”⁴⁷.

Although the focus of Escrivá’s writings and homilies on university pursuits was explicitly pastoral, there is one aspect that he shared in common with Newman, his concern for providing students with professors and peers who were role models of true Christian life. These examples would help them in their human and spiritual development. He employed the term “personal apostolate of friendship” for what the Oxford don called the power of “personal influence”.

Newman had found in John Keble, Richard H. Froude and Edward B. Pusey, to name only a few, true mentors and friends⁴⁸. Escrivá did not have mentors as such, but he found an inspiring example of Christian life in his father, José Escrivá, and mother, Dolores Albás⁴⁹. As a student and young priest he had the close support and friendship of Fr. José Pou de Foxá, professor of canon law, and Leopoldo Eijo y Garay, Bishop of Madrid. Early in his priesthood, Escrivá’s genuine friendship and charismatic personality became a great influence to his peers such as Isidoro Zorzano, a former classmate and Fr. José María Somoano, a hospital chaplain, and to the many university students that he encountered. He would teach the young men that followed him to lead their friends in a similar fashion. Both educators believed that virtue predisposes to the knowledge of truth, and that friendship with virtuous persons is therefore necessary for a harmonious growth in intellectual and moral life.

When Newman began the University of Ireland, he instituted a system of young single residential tutors for the college houses⁵⁰. Only twenty students were to reside in

⁴⁷ *Romana*, January-June, 2000, no. 30, p. 117.

⁴⁸ Newman’s *Letters and Diaries* provide extensive information on these friendships.

⁴⁹ Excerpts from Escrivá’s recollections of his parents and correspondence with close friends can be found in *The Founder of Opus Dei, The Life of Josemaría Escrivá*, Vol. 1.

⁵⁰ The residences were called collegiate houses. Newman drew up a procedure for the evaluation of candidates. He drafted a promise of obedience to the rules of the university and those in authority for those

each house to facilitate a more meaningful friendship between students and tutors. These friendships would foster the essential union of an intellectual and moral influence, the absence of which, according to Newman, was a great evil of his time. In the last discourse of *The Idea of a University*, he addressed the question: What makes a Christian or Catholic institution? He answered that it is not the formal teaching of Theology or the restriction on the free teaching of literature and science. A university is Christian by its *ethos* that is imparted through the influence of teachers who exemplify the ideal of the Christian humanism.

Msgr. Escrivá thought that Christians had to enliven state universities and other public institutions with the Gospel truths. He would concur with Newman that well formed Catholics with adequate pastoral attention should not be dissuaded from studying at non-Catholic universities. Both were, however, convinced that the Catholic Church exerts an important moral influence on education that safeguards its essence and integrity. Without theology, learning becomes a selfish intellectualism and a poor substitute for faith. Left to itself, it can turn into skepticism, then infidelity and finally into a cruel attack on the Church. Escrivá witnessed the increasing separation of physical science and Catholicism that Newman termed "a sort of jealousy and hostility between Religion and Physical philosophers" (Disc. IX). By contrast to Newman, Escrivá thought that universities have a direct mission and obligation to ensure the intellectual and moral formation of Christians. According to Alvaro d'Ors, this apostolic mission was precisely the justification for starting the University of Navarre.

The words of Professor Llano, a philosopher, and former president of the University of Navarre, sum up the spiritual leadership and human warmth of Msgr. Escrivá: "For many academics, a meeting with the founder of Opus Dei resulted in abandoning their lackadaisical and bourgeois spirit, and committing themselves to the research for truth, a love for freedom and the defense of justice, which transformed their academic vocation. He was a holy and wise man who helped them to understand that the

accepted to the university and a collegiate house, see *Letters and Diaries*, Vol. XVII, pp. 396-397, "Letter to Thomas Scranton", October 5, 1856.

ultimate mission of the university is to foster the freedom of God's children. Divine filiation is the secret that frees us from vanity and dispersion"⁵¹.

Throughout his life, the founder of *Opus Dei* urged men and women, among them numerous academics, to study their faith and defend it from within their respective fields. Already as a young priest he wrote in *The Way* what became a blueprint for his life work:

“Formerly, since human knowledge--science--was very limited, it seemed quite feasible for a single learned individual to undertake the defense and vindication of our holy Faith. Today, with the extension and the intensity of modern science, the apologists have to divide the work among themselves, if they want to defend the Church scientifically in all fields. You... cannot shirk this responsibility”⁵².

For Newman and Escrivá, liberal arts did not excuse students from dedication and service to their fellow men. A short consideration of their personal concern for and ministry to the sick and poor provides a more complete perspective of their vision of the interrelationship between university education and service through professional work. For them, the members of society that benefit from higher education have a grave responsibility to serve the common good. Medical care for all and social assistance for the poor are essential to any civilized society. A university cannot be an ivory tower that ignores the plight of men, women and children afflicted by illness and poverty. Universities must not only offer intellectual enrichment to its students, but must prepare them to provide many necessary material and human services to society at large⁵³. Newman and Escrivá's deep Christian spirit of service to the needy later gave fruition to various educational works that included a medical school in the respective universities which they established.

From Littlemore, Newman moved with his followers to a property in Oscott offered to him by Bishop Wiseman, and shortly afterwards, relocated to Birmingham. In this industrial city with many slums, the priests of the Oratory could carry out a

⁵¹ *Romana*, January-June, 2000, no. 30, p. 114.

⁵² *The Way*, n. 338.

⁵³ *Conversations with Msgr. Escrivá de Balaguer*, n. 75, p. 91.

desperately needed pastoral work among the poor and ignorant Catholic immigrants. The Oratory members would live a life of study combined with a generous service to the materially and spiritually poor. They settled into an old gin factory, adapting it for their needs and setting up a chapel. Within a few years, they began a school for the children of poor families. The Oxford scholar was behind all these material concerns and the charitable work with the indigent. Although absorbed in this consuming activity and his sacramental ministry, he maintained an abundant correspondence with many friends and intellectuals. It was in the midst of all these occupations that he accepted to establish the Catholic University of Ireland. Newman convinced the Irish hierarchy to have medicine as one of the original faculties by indicating the very small number of Catholic physicians in Dublin for a large Catholic population⁵⁴.

Fr. Josemaría also began his priesthood among the poor and uneducated families. His first assignments were short stays at two country parishes in the diocese of Zaragoza. When he transferred to Madrid to pursue a doctorate in canon law, he soon began to work with The Foundation for the Sick, an institution run by the Dames of Charity that cared materially and spiritually for the destitute of Madrid⁵⁵. Ministering to the sick, he saw Christ suffering in each one; he learned how to help them carry Christ's Cross, and he began to teach the first members of *Opus Dei* to do the same. He taught this spirit of Christian charity to university students studying engineering, architecture, medicine and law. These early students learned, through visits to the poor and other works of mercy, to grow in human and supernatural virtues, and some later served in leadership positions in Spanish society⁵⁶.

These reflections highlight Newman and Escrivá's commitment to a broad-based liberal arts university education. Each started a university that has flourished. (Since then the Catholic University of Ireland became University College Dublin). Both men had an

⁵⁴ See F.O.C. Meenan, pp. 5-6. Out of forty nine lecturers in five medical schools in Dublin, only two were Catholic. Out of one hundred eleven practitioners, only twelve were Catholics.

⁵⁵ See Andrés Vázquez de Prada, pp. 206-214.

⁵⁶ Josemaría Albareda was one of these students. In 1939 he helped to establish the National Council for Scientific Research (Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas) in Spain. See Peter Berglar, pp. 161-165.

educational vision that included professional arts, such as medicine, and that materialized in the creation of a medical school in their respective universities. They were convinced of the importance of personal influence and small colleges within the university for an education in virtue. Newman tried to open the way for laypersons to run Catholic universities. Escrivá successfully entrusted the University of Navarre to laypersons, single and married men and women.

Newman wrote on the educational theory regarding the nature of a university whereas, Escrivá addressed more ascetical aspects and planted the seeds for a new spirituality of work. The Oxford don has left an educational model inspired in Aristotelian ideals and open to religious truth. The Roman Monsignor exerted, through his pastoral work, a major impact among future educators who later began a number of universities modeled after Navarre. His seminal ideas on “unity of life” and a spirituality of work are the basis for far reaching theological studies that have barely begun.

The achievements of Venerable John Henry Newman and Saint Josemaría Escrivá are complementary despite the differences in their circumstances, personal styles and works. Both these educators stressed the harmony between faith and reason, and fostered studies in many areas of knowledge without fearing the truth and without violating the legitimate autonomy of each science. For them, openness to the full “circle of knowledge” was inherent to the idea of a university. They insisted that theology not only had as much claim as other sciences in a university, but also played an indispensable role.

As thinkers and pastors, both were immersed in the cultural and religious circumstances of their times. They keenly realized the need for Christian leaders in society and made it a priority to contribute to the formation of these future leaders. Thus their life work provides us with a rich source of inspiration to draw upon for the renewal of higher education in this new millennium. As great educators, these men are particularly compelling models for university presidents, administrators and professors to emulate.

