

London Newman Lecture – May 9th, 2019

Newman's Letters to Women

By Melanie McDonagh

This is a shortened version of a talk delivered in the Crypt of St Etheldreda's Church, Holborn

It's always a pleasure to engage with Newman. There is the fineness of his mind and the beauty of the prose and the independence of thought, but also the crabbiness and the crossness and the humanity: it all adds up to a very complete human being. He does say to one of his correspondents: "I am not a saint, saints do not tell or write tales".

He spanned the Victorian age, and that was the age of great letter-writers. Newman's life was in his letters – and they run to 32 volumes. His famous contemporaries all wrote incessantly to many correspondents. Newman was not a diarist, but in effect the letters take the form of a diary. The title of this talk is *Newman's Letters to Women*, a theme which was suggested to me by Eamonn Duffy, the church historian, because in crossing the gender divide he speaks in a way that is more unreserved than to other correspondents. He speaks more freely to women than, on the whole, he does to men. There was something about the character of his female correspondents that rendered him at ease with them.

We should look at his family. His mother was a very charming lady and he had five siblings, three brothers and two sisters, and it was absolutely evident that he was far closer to his two sisters. The sisters were Mary, Jemima and Harriet and of those three Harriet was a feisty sort of character and the freest to speak her mind. Jemima was the most constant correspondent, right until the end, and he wrote to her freely and reflectively. He wrote to Jemima almost as though he wrote to himself in a diary. Mary, however, died when she was very young.

Good-quality paper

He didn't speak down to his sisters at all, or indeed to any of his female correspondents. He commended to his future biographer sections of his letters to his mother and his sister as being a primary source of his life. He advised his sisters on the need to use good-quality paper because he was very alive to the value of his letters as an insight into his thinking at any time, and almost as the equivalent of a tape recorder, as a record of his thinking on any particular subject at any particular time.

Controversy engaged him for his entire life, and he was very conscious of having exact copies of a letter and copies of the correspondence from that time, so as to be able to refute any allegations that were made about any controversy after the event. So we can think of these letters as partly the contemporary equivalent of a tape recorder. We will come to other female correspondents later, but I just want to sound a warning at the outset about what these letters don't contain: they don't contain anything of any real bearing on any of the great issues of the time.

We have here a man who was extraordinarily prominent in his day, terrifically influential on the critical issues facing the Church, and yet who took next to no interest in conventional politics or letters. We have a letter at the outset which is addressed to his sister, who was 14 at the time, in 1815. "My Dear Jemima, it is always a great

pleasure for me to write to you, for the following reason. If I write to Harriet she always replies with a letter which is by no means suited to the dignity of my character but you, *Jemima*, always like a serious, sedate, sensible epistle.” He thought she was a kindred spirit, sedate and sensible rather than flighty like Harriet. But she and Mary shared his thoughts and affections and at one point he wrote to Harriet: “I cannot say how I love you. No calamity, I believe, could occur to me here so great as for me to lose your love and confidence. Of all my brothers and sisters you alone know my feelings and respond to them.”

But his conversion to Catholicism greatly tested his relationship. Harriet and he effectively ceased their communication for nine years before her death. She did not hold back in her views of his conversion. And it is perhaps because she loved him, and he loved her so much, that the falling-out between them was so very bitter. It is for those who are closest that an estrangement can cut most deeply. When it came



Melanie McDonagh

to *Jemima* she too got the brunt of his feelings, and his rudeness, at the time of his conversion. Even *Jemima*, the closest of the siblings, wounded him; in his seventies he wrote a furious letter about her reluctance to allow him near her family.

Writing to *Jemima*

But his letters to *Jemima* were reflexive and poured out of him as they might to a diary – on one occasion he told her he had a headache and could not study so was giving himself the pleasure of writing to her. When she told of her engagement to John Mozley he found it a loss: “A brother never had a greater loss, nor another a greater gain. I have been thinking, praying and dreaming of you ever since”.

He was never able to show his feelings to his mother and his sisters. But his mother and his aunt Betsy were dear to him; his letters to them showed him at his best, kindly and solicitous. To his mother he wrote: I believe my first wish on earth is for your happiness and comfort, my dear Mother, though I do not show it near so much as I ought and desire. He tried to keep the controversy over his conversion from his aunt.

He wrote of revisiting their childhood home: “Whatever good there is in me I owe under grace to the time I spent in that house and to you and my dear grandmother, its inhabitants. I do not forget her bibles and the prints in it. Alas my dear Aunt, I am but a sorry bargain, and perhaps if you knew all about me you would hardly think me worth claiming.”

He shared all his hopes and reflections with his mother: when he and his party ousted Robert Peel from Parliament (he was too keen on Catholic Emancipation) he shared his thoughts on victory with her. He wrote a fine description to his mother of his first

impression of the Pope on his visit to Rome. In his correspondence you can see the material for his sermon as an Anglican, on the love of relations and friends, in which has in his sights those “who love their fellow man and hate their nextdoor neighbour” or rather those who are “morose and cruel in their private relations but who profess a love of humankind.” We get to read some of the girls’ letters back and you could say that the spirit of Jane Austen inhabited them (“Miss Austen has no romance, none at all: what vile creatures her parsons are!”) Poor Newman attempted to help find them husbands, which misfired in the case of Jemima and Robert Wilberforce, son of the campaigner William.

He had a number of female friends including the impossible and beautiful Maria Giberne with whom his brother Frank had fallen in love. As Sister Maria Pia she featured in his correspondence until her death and she proved invaluable during the Achilli trial*. Then there were the wives of his friends such as Mrs Mary Wilberforce, and Elizabeth Bowden, who married his friend John Bowden; there was, too, Catherine Froude, sister-in-law of his great friend Hurrell Froud. Some of those letters were written to them when they were bereaved, suggesting a real appreciation of the value of marriage. In the case of Mary Wilberforce he shared the agonies over his being received into the Catholic Church. “Time alone can turn a view into a conviction....the greater the sacrifice, the more cogent the testimony.”

He advised a number of female converts, characteristically advising them to think for some time about what they were doing. For Anglicans three or even seven years was the period he seems to have considered necessary for reflection – but, when convinced, they should act. To Mary Holmes he advised: “To any friend who asked



The Crypt of St Etheldreda's

me what to do I should prescribe three years. It is a comfort in matters of religion to follow, not to originate: do not rush forward, but follow”.

In fact it was to Mary Holmes that he wrote: “I made things worse by being rude when I wished to show my sympathy. As for myself, you are not the only person to be disappointed in me. Romantic people always will be. I am, in all my ways of going on, A VERY ORDINARY PERSON.”

St Catherine succeeded

He never patronised women; indeed, at one point he wrote to Emily Bowles, who talked to him about what she would do for him if she were a man by responding, that he should ask rather what she would do if she were a woman “for it was St Catherine (of Siena) who advised a Pope and succeeded – but St Thomas of Canterbury and St Edmund tried and failed.” He was never quite as horrid in his letters to women as to men, but he revealed himself to Elizabeth Bowles on his doubts about Rome or about Manning in a way he had not done to anyone else. To Charlotte Wood he wrote about his antagonism towards Manning in respect of Oxford, concluding: “Now I have taken a great liberty with you. For I never wrote thus plainly and fully to any person yet.” And his letters were theological and serious; his exposition of Faith and Reason articulated general principles exactly as he would have done for a man.

To the end of his life he wrote with a quill pen. He would often tell his correspondents that “I can’t write because my hand hurts”. The physical effort of writing for hours and hours at a stretch was such that he couldn’t hold the pen, and it is a minor miracle that he didn’t end up with what we call repetitive strain injury.

As I say, he never patronised women as correspondents in religious matters and he wrote confidentially to women in a way in which he simply didn’t do to men. He wrote a letter to Elizabeth Bowles on his doubts about the character of Rome, in that the debate within the Church was no longer what it had been in the Middle Ages. He said that the letter was most private and he hadn’t ever written to anybody in this way before. He discussed a controversy with Manning over whether Catholic young men should be allowed, or encouraged, to attend Oxford. Newman’s view was that rather than set up a Catholic college there should be a rectory house or a Jesuit house specifically designed to give support to young men who were surrounded by unbelievers – at that time when there was a lot of agnosticism at Oxford. It is interesting that he never wrote to a man about this highly sensitive subject, yet he wrote to Charlotte Wood about it. He also wrote about one of his expositions on Faith and Reason to Charlotte Wood, and also discussed the excessive level of control by the Vatican.

“It is not good for a Pope to live twenty years,” he wrote, “because he becomes a God and there is no-one to contradict him. He has no new facts and does cruel things without meaning it.” In other words, he wrote to this lady in a way that would have been exceptionally dicey if he had written it to anybody else. It could have been his undoing. But to at least three women he wrote confidentially about controversies that could have got him into great difficulties. He trusted them, and wrote to them most fully.

At the end of a very long life it is quite moving that one of his letters was to Grace, who was Harriet’s daughter. She came back from Australia and came to see him and he was terrifically kind to her. His letters came full circle: he had started out with the most

intimate letters to his mother and his sisters and he ended with an affectionate letter to Grace and then a meeting with her in which he held her hand throughout.

Newman's letters to women, I think, are particularly illuminating about his character. They show, I think, a little more vulnerability, and a respect for their intelligence, their courage as converts being quite equal to that of any of his close male friends. So, without trying to suggest for an instant that Newman was a feminist I think we can say from his correspondence that he was a friend of women.

Melanie McDonagh is a columnist for The Tablet and a leader writer for the London Evening Standard.

*In 1851 Newman was successfully sued for libel by Giacinto Achilli, an Italian ex-Dominican who was a notorious sexual predator and had fled from Italy to England.

Children of Abraham: Interfaith Topics

A Study Conference at the Bar Convent, York, on July 13th and 14th

Dr George Herring on

John Henry Newman and the Oxford Movement

In the course of three talks George Herring outlined the religious journey of John Henry Newman over a period of about thirty years. From his initial allegiance to evangelicalism he moved to become involved in the Oxford Movement, including a leading role in the Tractarian group, but then he went on to choose withdrawal from the Church of England in 1843 and his conversion to Rome in 1845.

As a teenager Newman was influenced by an evangelical schoolmaster. Evangelicals believe that the Gospels provide the only word of God, which no other authority can challenge. He achieved entry to Oxford University but disappointed in his final exams. His qualities, however, were enough to enable him to be elected as a Fellow of Oriel College.

At this period he came to be influenced by several people including John Keble and Hurrell Froude, from High Church backgrounds. He was drawn into the so-called Oxford Movement, in the watershed period 1828-33. It was a very political period for the Anglican Church with a great debate going on over the relationship between the Church and the State. The Irish political leader Daniel O'Connell was elected for County Clare but as a Catholic was not allowed to take his seat in Parliament. The Roman Catholic Relief Act 1829 permitted Catholics to sit in Parliament and opened the way for the Catholic Church to resume a significant role in Britain. In 1830, moreover, a Whig government took control with a reformist agenda.

The Oxford Movement became focused on the relationship between the Church of England and the State. Its philosophy was embodied in the *Tracts for the Times*, about 90 of which were published between 1833 and 1841, several of them being written by Newman, including Number One. As the purely English role of the Anglican

Church faded under political pressures the Oxford Movement's leaders felt a need to understand better how their Church fitted into the broader sweep of Christianity, including the Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions.

According to George Herring: "The Tractarians weren't really Anglicans; they were a sort of Catholic fifth column." The debate was intense, and some three-quarters of a million copies of the various Tracts were printed. Under this pressure Newman himself began to have problems and in his later *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* he highlighted the Long Vacation of 1839 as a critical period. Arguments were raging at this time about the Donatists, a fourth century sect in North Africa who declared a unique Catholicity but were eventually declared as heretical, not least by St Augustine. The question was raised about whether the Tractarians were modern Donatists: "This shook Newman," according to George Herring.



Dr George Herring

There followed in 1841 a controversial move by the British and Prussian governments to appoint a joint Bishop of Jerusalem, representing both the Anglican and Lutheran churches.

At this point Newman left Oxford University and retreated to become Vicar of Littlemore, a hamlet a few miles away. In 1843 he preached his last Anglican sermon there, producing audible sobs in church from old colleagues such as John Keble. For many it seemed that he was about to betray the traditions of the Church of England. Indeed, two years later Dominic Barberi arrived at Littlemore and John Henry Newman's conversion to Rome was completed. "But Newman's conversion did not trigger large numbers of others," said George Herring. "His was a lonely journey to Catholicism."

A few extracts from Newman's writings:

Now then, let me come at once to the subject which leads me to address you. Should the government and the country so forget their God as to cast off the Church, to deprive it of its temporal honours and substance, on what will you rest the claim of respect and attention which you make upon your flocks? Hitherto you have been upheld by your birth, your education, your wealth, your connexions; should these secular advantages cease, on what must Christ's ministers depend? Is this not a serious practical question? We know how miserable is the state of religious bodies not supported by the state. Look at the Dissenters on all sides of you, and you will see at once that their ministers, depending simply on the people, become the creatures of the people. Are you content that this should be your case?

Tracts for the Times Number One, 1833

For thirty, forty, fifty years I have resisted to the best of my powers the spirit of liberalism in religion. Never did Holy Church need champions against it more sorely

than now, when – alas! – it is an error overspreading, as a snare, the whole earth..... Liberalism in religion is the doctrine that there is no positive truth in religion, but that one creed is as good as another, and this is the teaching which is gaining substance and force daily. It is inconsistent with any recognition of any religion as *true*. It teaches that all are to be tolerated, for all are matters of opinion.

Speech at his creation as cardinal, 1879

I am giving up a maintenance involving no duties, and adequate to all my wants. What in the world am I doing this for (I ask myself) except that I think I am called to do so? I am making a large income by my sermons. I am, to say the very least, risking this; the chance is that my sermons will have no further sale at all. I have a good name with many; I am deliberately sacrificing it. I have a bad name with many more. I am fulfilling all their worst wishes, and giving them their most coveted triumph. I am distressing all I love, unsettling all I have instructed or aided. I am going to those whom I do not know, and of whom I expect very little. I am making myself an outcast, and that at my age. Oh, what can it be but a stern necessity which causes this?

Letter to his sister Jemima on March 15th 1845, seven months before his conversion

The great point is to open men's minds – to educate them – and to make them logical. It does not matter what the subject is, which you use for this purpose. If you make them think in politics, you will make them think in religion.

Letter, 1859

Now, in attempting to investigate what are the distinct offices of Faith and Reason in religious matters, and the relation of the one to the other, I observe, first, that undeniable though it be, that reason has a power of analysis and criticism in all opinion and conduct, that nothing is true or right but what may be justified, and, in a certain sense, proved by it, and undeniable, in consequence, that unless the doctrines received by Faith are approved by reason, they have no claim to be regarded as true, it does not therefore follow that faith is actually grounded on the receiving mind itself; unless, indeed, to take a parallel case, a judge can be called the origin, as well as the justifier, of the innocence or truth of these brought before him. A judge does not make men honest, but acquits or vindicates them; in like manner, Reason need not be the origin of Faith, as faith exists in the very persons believing it, though it does test and verify it.

Faith and Reason Contrasted as Habits of Mind University Sermon X, 1839

It is indeed sometimes said that the stream is clearest near the spring. Whatever use may fairly be made of this image, it does not apply to the history of a philosophy or sect, which, on the contrary, is more equable, and purer, and stronger, when its bed has become deep, and broad, and full. It necessarily rises out of an existing state of things, and, for a time, savours of the soil. Its vital element needs disengaging from what is foreign and temporary, and is employed in efforts after freedom, more vigorous and hopeful as its years increase. Its beginnings are no measure of its capabilities, nor of its scope.

An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine, 1845

George Herring is a church historian. His books include *What Was the Oxford Movement?* (Continuum, 2002) and *An Introduction to the History of Christianity* (Bloomsbury, 2006)

Spirituality Page

Some poems of Newman

It is easy to forget that in addition to well-known verses such as the *Dream of Gerontius*, Newman wrote many other poems and, when we are now marking his canonisation in this issue,

it is appropriate to look at some of them. The following examples were all composed during his visit to the Mediterranean in 1832-1833 and on his journey home by sea. Clearly he was in a rich vein of poetry as at the same time he composed *The Pillar of the Cloud*, better known by its opening lines: *Lead, Kindly Light*.



The first of these is titled *Hope* and was composed at Valetta on February 5th 1833:

We are not children of a guilty sire,
Since Noe stepp'd from out his wave-toss'd home
And a stern baptism flush'd earth's faded bloom.
Not that the heavens then clear'd, or cherub's fire,
From Eden's portal did at once retire;
But thoughts were stirr'd of Him who was to come,
Whose rainbow hues so streak'd the o'ershadowing gloom,
That faith could e'en that desolate scene admire.
The Lord has come and gone; and we now wait
The second substance of the deluge type,
When our slight ark shall cross a molten surge;
So, while the gross earth melts, for judgment ripe,
Ne'er with its haughty turrets to emerge,
We shall mount up to Eden's long-lost gate.

The second is titled *The Power of Prayer* and was composed "at sea" on June 24th 1833:

There is not on earth a soul so base
But may obtain a place
In covenanted grace;
So that his feeble prayer of faith obtains
Some loosening of his chains,
And earnest of the great release, which rise

From gift to gift, and reach at length the eternal prize.

All may save self; - but minds that heavenward tower.

Aim at a wider power,

Gifts on the world to shower.-

And this is not at once; - by fastings gained,

And trials well sustain'd,

By pureness, righteous deeds, and toils of love,

Abidance in the Truth, and zeal for God above.

The last one is titled *Sensitiveness* and is a call to all of us to be firm in defence of Christian truth and values. It was composed at Lanzalet, Malta, on January 15th 1833:

Time was, I shrank from what was right

From fear of what was wrong;

I would not brave the sacred fight,

Because the foe was strong.

Bur now I cast that finer sense

And sorer shame aside;

Such dread of sin was indolence,

Such aim at Heaven was pride.

So, when my Saviour calls, I rise

And calmly do my best;

Leaving to Him, with silent eyes

Of hope and fear, the rest.

I step, I mount where He has led;

Men count my haltings o'er; -

I know them; yet though self I dread,

I love his precept more.

Readers may like to know that Newman's verse is collected in *John Henry Newman, Collected Poems and the Dream of Gerontius*, published by Fisher Press in 1992. It appears to be out of print but is available second hand.

Anne and John Duddington

Rome in the First Century, and later

Between September 2nd and 9th a Newman Pilgrimage toured Rome

By Barry Riley

Newman pilgrims have visited Rome several times before but this time we probed deeper. We ventured into the depths of the cellars beneath Roman villas, into the lowest levels of Emperor Nero's palace and into Jewish catacombs which few have entered for the past 1,600 years. We also descended to the level of gloomy basements where in the First Century Roman soldiers once worshipped Mithras, a God who came down to earth to slay a bull.



Newman pilgrims in part of the Roman Forum

The group of some 25 pilgrims also, however, visited some more conventional attractions. Our chaplain, Mgr Patrick Kilgariff, said Mass for us in the Crypt of St Peter's (actually in the Irish Chapel there) and afterwards we had a guided tour of the basilica, with indications of where a number of Popes were buried. Interesting facts were pointed out to us, such as that almost all the pictures in St Peter's are mosaics rather than paintings. Later in the week we returned to the Vatican for the evening opening of the Museum. This gave us the chance to visit the Sistine Chapel and there the tired Newman pilgrims sank gratefully on to the benches at the sides. Sitting, it was much easier to gaze up at the magnificent ceiling. All around hundreds of other visitors milled about, occasionally warned by guards to keep silent and not to use cameras.



Two missing from the main group picture

Jewish history in Rome

A main theme of the pilgrimage was the early history of the Jews in Rome. Over the centuries the Jews have had a chequered history in Italy, as in many other countries, but there was a good beginning in 161BC with the Rome-Jewish Treaty signed by Judas Maccabeus at a time when the Jews were in serious conflict with the Greeks and the Persians. Later the Jews were favourably regarded by Julius Caesar, and our guide around the Jewish Museum, Ursula, remarked that to this day Cesare is a common first name for Jews in Rome.

The next day we went along the Appian Way to explore the Jewish Catacombs of Vigna Randanini, and unexpectedly it was the fast-talking Ursula who turned up again as our guide. Here we were far away from the normal tourist trail, exploring tunnels which are not normally open to the public and have scarcely been developed: we had to wear hard hats and carry our own lights with us. It was moving to see so many holes in the walls of the tunnels, spaces dug for bodies to be laid in, each covered only by a cloth so that nothing remains many centuries later. It was especially sad to see so many little spaces, meant for small children and often for babies: the infant death rate at the time was very high. These catacombs were in use between the 2nd and 4th centuries and were then forgotten until they were accidentally rediscovered in 1859.

Decorations are rare in the Jewish Catacombs but occasionally there were stones inscribed with names, and occasionally with indications of the professions of the deceased. But there were several depictions of the menorah, the seven-branch candelabrum which became a symbol of early Judaism. And we



Palm tree in the catacomb



A menorah in the catacomb

were shown one or two burial chambers where the walls had been plastered and paintings added, including of peacocks and, in one case, of a palm tree complete with fruit.

The fortunes of the Jews fluctuated, however, and in the area of the Roman Forum later in the week we were taken to the Arch of Titus which celebrates the victory of the Romans over the

rebellious Jews in Jerusalem in 71 AD and the destruction of the Temple there. A frieze on the Arch depicts a golden menorah seized as booty and being carried in triumph. It was displayed as a war trophy until 455 AD but after the sack of Rome by the Vandals it disappeared without trace.

Although the later history of the Jews in Rome was not strictly on our agenda our guides Ursula and Michelle were very keen to tell us of dramatic events. In 1555 Pope Paul IV placed restrictions on the Jewish community in Rome, requiring them to live in a ghetto which was next to the River Tiber and liable to flooding. This restriction lasted for three centuries until the Papal States were taken over by the Kingdom of Italy in 1870. After this most of the buildings in the Ghetto were demolished, new river embankments ended the flooding and then, in 1900, a grand Synagogue of Rome was erected, which we visited.

The worst part of the story was still to come, however, under Nazi occupation during the Second World War. Even though the Jews of Rome paid a ransom of 50 kilograms of gold some 1,000 people were seized and deported anyway to Auschwitz on October 16, 1943. We were shown the sad little brass nameplates now embedded in the pavements all over the Ghetto area to commemorate the lost individuals.



a kosher artichoke

Our guide Michelle told us how the Ghetto people could only afford vegetables in the markets which were unwanted by others, which often meant artichokes. A common dish in the Ghetto was therefore fried artichokes, and when the Newman pilgrims ate lunch at a kosher restaurant what else did we eat but fried artichoke? The response of our members was somewhat mixed.

But our priority was to return to the First Century and explore the

unfortunate experiences of two Jews in particular. We visited Tre Fontane, a tranquil site south of Rome where St Paul was taken for execution by the order of Emperor Nero in 64AD. As a Roman citizen he was able to choose beheading rather than crucifixion. Legend has it that his head bounced three times and in each place a spring appeared. Today there is a Trappist Monastery nearby and a Church of St Paul of Three Fountains stands on the exact site of his martyrdom (though the springs appear to have dried up).

Peter and Paul

Back in central Rome we visited the Mamertine Prison where both Peter and Paul were held before their executions. By Christian tradition St Peter also died in 64 AD, at a time when Nero was anxious to blame Christians for the Great Fire of Rome. He chose to be upside-down when crucified to demonstrate his humility compared to Jesus Christ. Today the altar of St Peter's Basilica is located directly above the site of Peter's crucifixion.



Golden helmets for a golden palace; our members in Nero's Domus Aurea

Nero was a focus again on our programme when we visited the ruins of his extravagant villa, the Domus Aurea, or Golden Palace. At one place we were fitted with virtual reality headsets so that we could experience the grandeur and space, including impressive gardens, which the palace provided for Nero's privileged guests. But soon after Nero died the palace was buried as later emperors built their own extravagant monuments: indeed, the Colosseum was built a few years later on part of the site.

Perhaps the most impressive visual experience came when we assembled beneath Trajan's Column to visit the remains of 4th century patrician villas which were later buried beneath 16th century buildings but have recently been excavated and turned into a showpiece. Walking on sheets of thick glass we could see underneath us the baths and the luxurious mosaic floors of these sumptuous homes. The full decorative splendour of the villas was projected on to the ruined remains. This recreation of Roman extravagance was followed up by a video of one of the last conquests of the



The 7th century church of San Giorgio in Velabro

Roman Empire, when Dacia (today's Romania) was attacked and eventually swallowed up. The details of this vicious campaign in the early 2nd century, under Emperor Trajan, are represented in a sculptured frieze which spirals all the way up Trajan's Column.

There were other memorable experiences. One evening our pilgrimage organiser Anthony Coles escorted us to the nearby Colosseum where, in the absence of the daytime crowds, he was able to explain some of the features and history of the stadium which could accommodate 50,000 bloodthirsty spectators. But he

insisted that there was no historical evidence that Christians were actually fed to the lions there, which oddly some of us found slightly disappointing.

We belong to the Newman Association, but unfortunately we were five weeks too early for our patron's canonisation on October 13th. Our pilgrimage included, however, a visit to Cardinal Newman's titular church, San Giorgio in Velabro, where



Fr Pat preparing for Mass in the Chapel of St Benedict, at the Basilica of St Paul's Outside the Walls



Fr Pat examines Newman's commemoration stone

Fr Pat, our chaplain, said Mass and delivered a wonderful homily on the life and achievements of St John Henry. The church was humble but on the wall was a grand engraved stone dedicated to "Ioannus Henricus S.R.E.

Cardinalis Newman AN. MDCCCLXXIX – AN. MDCCCLXXXX". At the end of Mass we sang a rousing chorus of Newman's hymn Praise to the Holiest in the Height.

We are very grateful to Fr Pat for his daily Masses, for instance in the Basilica of St Paul's Outside the Walls as well as in St Peter's, and for his constant help and guidance which reflected local knowledge he gained in the years he spent in Rome as Rector of the Venerable English College. We also thank Anthony Coles for his splendid organisation of the Pilgrimage and his ability to cope with cancelled flights on the way out and a British Airways pilots' strike on the way back.

Can Faith and Science be Reconciled?

By Fr Andrew Pinsent

Over 80 people attended a lecture organised in June by the Eastbourne and Bexhill Circle. Fr Pinsent is Research Director of the Ian Ramsey Centre, at the Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Oxford. He is a priest of the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton. This is a simplified summary of a PowerPoint presentation running to 72 slides.

God and philosophy

Belief that there is a God is not unique to those who are “religious”, c.f. philosophical arguments of Plato, Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, Aristotle, Newton, Descartes, Kant etc.

This fact is obscured in contemporary culture due to the influence of (new) atheists, who generally argue (and want to believe) that theists are generally primitive, irrational and evil. So it is helpful to be aware of intellectual inferences that there is a God drawn simply from examining the world.

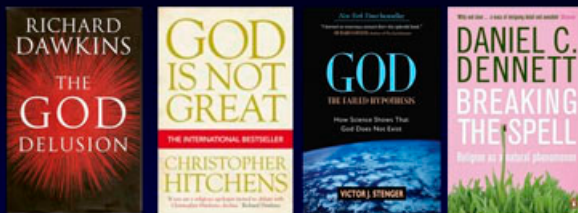


Fr Andrew Pinsent

These lines of reasoning lead to the conclusion that there is a God, although not (by themselves) to faith.

What the New Atheists share is a belief that religion should not simply be tolerated but should be countered, criticized and exposed by rational argument wherever its

Some of the New Atheists ...



“What the New Atheists share is a belief that religion should not simply be tolerated but should be countered, criticized and exposed by rational argument wherever its influence arises.”

Hooper, Simon. “The rise of the New Atheists” CNN. <http://www.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/Europe/11/06/atheism.feature/index.html>

“Militant atheists tend to make one or both of two claims that moderate atheists do not. The first is that religion is demonstrably false or nonsense, and the second is that it is usually or always harmful.”

Julian Baggini. *Atheism* 2003. Page 150.

influence arises."

Hooper, Simon. "The rise of the New Atheists". CNN.

"Militant atheists tend to make one or both of two claims that moderate atheists do not. The first is that religion is demonstrably false or nonsense, and the second is that it is usually or always harmful."

Julian Baggini. *Atheism*. 2003. Page 1

Religion and faith

Belief in God's existence and religion overlap but are not identical. Besides facts or inferences about the world, religion typically involves worship, traditions, ritual and other elements. The conception of 'God' and the relationship with God vary considerably, e.g. Islam (mainly third-personal); Christianity and 'narrative Judaism' (mainly second-personal) and Buddhism ('no-personal,' i.e. no personal God or relation). This talk focuses on '**faith**,' the root virtue of a **second-person relation to God** by grace (divine adoption) in Catholicism.

The Father of the "Big Bang"

Mgr Georges Lemaître (d. 1966), a Belgian Catholic priest, proposed what became known as the "Big Bang" theory of the origin of the Universe, deriving what became known as "Hubble's Law" in a paper in 1927, two years before Edwin Hubble confirmed the expansion of the universe. He also proposed the way in which the theory might be tested by searching for radiation from the Big Bang. He died on shortly after having learned of the discovery of cosmic microwave background radiation, proof of his intuitions about the birth of the Universe.

Mgr Gregor Mendel, Father of modern genetics

Gregor Mendel (d. 1884) was an Austrian Augustinian priest and scientist often called the "father of genetics" for his study of the inheritance of traits in peas (between 1856 and 1863 Mendel cultivated and tested c. 29,000 pea plants). Mendel showed that the inheritance of traits follows particular laws, later named after him. Mendel's paper was published in 1866 in *Proceedings of the Natural History Society of Brunn*, but largely



Mgr Georges Lemaître



Mgr Gregor Mendel

ignored for nearly half a century. The rediscovery of Mendel's work prompted the foundation of genetics.

Fr Angelo Secchi, Father of astrophysics

Fr. Angelo Secchi (d. 1878), S.J., Director of the Vatican Observatory, made the first spectroscopic survey of the heavens, classifying stars by four spectral types. He also studied sunspots, solar prominences, photographed solar corona during the eclipse of 1860, invented the heliospectroscope, star spectroscope, telespectroscope and meteorograph. He also studied double stars, weather forecasting and terrestrial magnetism. He is considered to be the father of the "spectral classification of stars", leading to an understanding of their physics and evolution.

Fr Nicholas Steno, Father of stratigraphy

Fr Nicolas Steno (d. 1686) was the founder of stratigraphy, the interpretation of rock strata. He is credited with the *law of superposition*, the *principle of original horizontality*, and the *principle of lateral continuity*, which are the building blocks for the interpretation of the natural history of rocks and the development of geology. Note that a Catholic layman, Georg Pauer (d. 1555) earned the title "father of mineralogy" for his great work *On the Nature of Metals*.

Fr Boscovitch, SJ, Father of field theory

Fr. Boscovich's *Theoria Philosophiae Naturalis* (1758) developed a theory of matter as consisting of many dimensionless points, with the mutual attraction of any pair of points being some general function of the distance between them, represented by an oscillatory curve. Field theory is now fundamental to modern physics. Einstein's efforts in 1919 to create a unified theory of physics was based upon extending Newtonian theory along the lines of Boscovich, who was also an early advocate of atomic theory. Yet few textbooks mention him today.

Faith forming understanding: via philosophy



St Thomas Aquinas O.P.
1225-1274

Principles adopted, introduced or transfigured
by Catholic intellectual life:

THE PERSON

SUBSTANCE AND ACCIDENT

FREE WILL AND INTELLECT

VIRTUE ETHICS UNIFIED BY CARITAS (LOVE)

SECONDARY CAUSATION

THE FOUR CAUSES

CRITICAL REALISM

MATTER AS GOOD, NOT EVIL

OBJECTIVE AND NATURAL LAW

IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

NATURE AND SUPERNATURAL GRACE

SECOND-PERSON RELATEDNESS TO GOD

PRINCIPLE OF NON-CONTRADICTION

Fr Rene Hauy, Father of crystallography

René Haüy (d. 1822) was ordained a priest and had a strong amateur interest in science. Examining the fragments of a calcareous spar, he was led to make experiments which resulted in the statement of the geometrical law of crystallization associated with his name. Haüy is also known for the observations he made in pyroelectricity. His brother was Valentin Haüy, the founder of the first school for the blind, its most famous student being Louis Braille.

Fr Nicholas Callan, Pioneer in electronics

The induction coil was invented by priest and scientist Fr. Nicholas Callan in 1836 at St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, inspired by the work of Michael Faraday. An induction coil produces an intermittent high-voltage alternating current from a low-voltage direct current supply. It is one of the foundations of modern electronic technology. Induction coils were used to provide high voltage for early gas discharge and Crookes tubes and for X-ray research. Fr. Callan also invented the "Maynooth Battery" in 1854, using inexpensive cast-iron instead of platinum or carbon. He built the world's largest battery at that time, and discovered an early form of galvanisation to protect iron from rusting.

Women as early scientists in Catholic Italy

Maria Gaetana Agnesi (d. 1799) was one of a number of remarkable women scientists associated with the University of Bologna in the 18th century. Others include Laura Bassi (d. 1778), Anna Morandi Manzolina (d. 1774), and Maria Dalle Donne (d. 1842). Agnesi is credited with writing the first book discussing both differential and integral calculus. In 1750, Maria Agnesi was appointed by Pope Benedict XIV to the chair of mathematics and natural philosophy at Bologna. After the death of her father in 1752 she gave herself to the study of theology, the care of the poor, homeless, and sick. She eventually joined a religious order in Milan. To put this achievement in perspective, Winifred Merrill was the first woman to be awarded a PhD in mathematics in the United States – in 1886.

Other Catholic women pioneers



Left: Laura Bassi (d. 1778): the first woman to earn a professorship in physics at a university in Europe and the **first woman in the world to earn a university chair in a scientific field of studies**. One of her most important patrons was Cardinal Prospero Lambertini, later to become Pope Benedict XIV, who encouraged her scientific work. Right: Elena Cornaro Piscopia (d. 1684): in 1678 she became **the first woman in the world to receive a Ph.D. degree**.

Other Catholic women pioneers

Laura Bassi (d. 1778): the first woman to earn a professorship in physics at a university in Europe and the **first woman in the world to earn a university chair in a scientific field** of studies. One of her most important patrons was Cardinal Prospero Lambertini, later to become Pope Benedict XIV, who encouraged her scientific work. : Elena Cornaro Piscopia (d. 1684): in 1678 she became **the first woman in the world to receive a Ph.D. degree.**

Faith and Science: are they compatible?

Most of the time, modern science deals with matters that are not directly connected with faith at all, often involving measurements, laws and quantities.

What should be clear from these examples is that **there are no grounds for supposing a naïve hostility to exist between faith and science**, or that being a person of faith precludes fruitfulness in science and intellectual life at the highest levels.

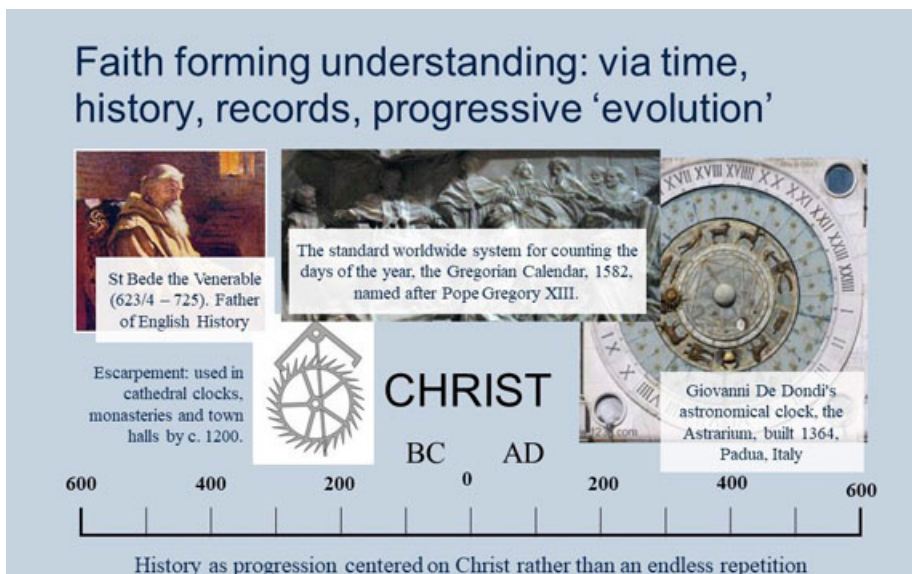
But is there a stronger causal connection between faith and fruitfulness in science? Is the weak conclusion the best that we can offer: that faith and science are not incompatible....?

What would help?

To draw on two thousand years of faith-formed genius to communicate that belief in God and a life of faith is intellectually respectable.

To impart some basic historical facts, e.g. Catholic formation of universities etc., to inoculate against falsehoods.

To show the value of faith in shaping our world, especially via '**organic apologetics**': **roots** (history and origins of our civilisation) and **fruits**.



Annual General Meeting: June 8th

The Association's AGM was held at Newman House in London's Bloomsbury district on June 8th. The following were elected to Council: Winifred Flanagan (President), Dr Patricia Egerton, Dr Harcourt Concannon and Alex Mthobi. Dr Michael Jameson and Anthony Baker will continue as Council members for another year. Also, Brian Hamill and Kevin Ryan agreed to be co-opted as Acting Secretary and Acting Treasurer respectively. In addition Dr Ian Jessiman has been co-opted for another year to complete his work on a transition to CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) status.



Winifred Flanagan (President)

The constitutional debate



Ian Jessiman

Following Mass, said by the National Chaplain Mgr Patrick Kilgariff, and lunch there were two further sessions. One was led by Ian Jessiman, who had previously written two letters to members about the possibility of changing the legal status of the Association. "Why does the Newman need to change its constitution?" he asked. He explained that the Association's present status was not entirely up to date, but it was essential to avoid any repetition of the disaster at the previous AGM when Council's proposals were thrown out. "Fortunately, since 2018, it has become possible for us to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, but also to do it by direct conversion."

He pointed out, as an example, that the Archdiocese of Southwark had become a CIO.

At present we were both a charity and a company and had to report to two authorities, which involved an awful lot of work. A direct conversion would require that the objects were unchanged, but it would be much simpler than setting up a complete new charitable body. If we wanted to change the objects we would have to look at the question again later on. But if we wished to change some details, such as the membership criteria, it was not clear whether this could be done.

He then discussed the membership criteria in more detail. "Do we want to remain Catholic, do we wish to be open to all Christians or do we wish to be open to everybody?" His first letter, 535 copies of which had been posted in March, was an attempt to find out the current thinking of members, he said. He had received 40 replies, nine of which wanted the Association to remain strictly Catholic. So Council could be "pretty hard-pushed" to obtain the required 75 per cent majority. There appeared to be a North-South divide. In these circumstances, Ian Jessiman said, "we would be wise to leave the membership criteria as they are."

There ensued a lively discussion amongst the 25 or so members present, with different views put forward, but in the end a show of hands was called for on direct conversion and the proposal was passed 'nem con'. Any changes in the membership criteria would be left for future Councils to consider.

Addressing the Future



Patricia Egerton

Leeds Conference, called *The Way Forward*. There were lots of ideas and suggestions "but I don't think anything has come of it." She said we had to appeal to other age groups and persuade active people to join the circles. Otherwise we were not going to survive for very long.

Harcourt Concannon said he was going to be entirely practical and to the point. "Let me run through the kind of issues that we are trying to cope with. It has often been said that the life of the Association is in its circles, but the trouble is that too many circles are in decline and we need to do something to reverse that. We should look at places where there were circles and where there are opportunities to do something about it.

Planting new circles would require a lot of effort, and resources, he said, but we had the money to do it and we should use the money to revive the Association. We also needed to think of ways in which the Association could support new circles. We could restore a better connection between the circles and Council. He suggested that much more use should be made of the Gift Aid scheme, particularly in regard to small

Finally, two Council members, Patricia Egerton and Harcourt Concannon, put forward their views on how the Newman should respond to the pressures facing it, especially from its falling membership. Patricia Egerton, the Membership Registrar, said that the Association had been losing 46 members a year on average for the past several years. "I think we have got to do something serious about it," she said. "We are so lucky that we have successful circles. But we haven't formed any new circles recently."

We needed, she said, to revive the Newman Association. "We should be formulating plans and prioritising actions, to actually grow. There are challenges for this Association if we are going to survive." She said there was a marvellous report two years before, after the

donations at regular meetings. All of that money should be returned to the circles.

He then turned back to centralised questions. "One is the question of communications. It's very difficult if communication by post to our members costs us something like £500. Other organisations communicate with their members by email, but I just don't think we have all the email addresses of our members. If we did it would make a huge difference." He said he belonged to some other organisations which used social media, such as a local art group which communicated by What's App. Facebook, too, was used by a lot of organisations.

"I think we need to look at the website," he said. "There's very little which is up-to-date on it. If you have a decent website it's going to cost money. Then you've got to use it. We've also got a Newsletter, and maybe

we could make a lot more of it. Maybe there are possibilities in the Newman Journal. There is a whole field of communications which needs to be looked at."

Harcourt Concannon concluded with the thought that tackling the future was an essential task. The trouble was, people who had the talent and the ideas and had the time had not come forward. "We need such people to come forward," he said.



Harcourt Concannon

Membership Report

We welcome the following new members of the Newman Association, who have recently joined the Circles indicated:

To the Eastbourne and Bexhill Circle, Mrs Joyann Green; to the Worcester Circle, Dr Malcolm Murray; to the Swansea (University) Circle, Prof David Britton; to the Glasgow Circle, Mr Neil MacKinnon, Fr John O'Connor, Mrs Mary Lappin, Mr Gerald O'Hagan and Mrs Ellen Williamson; to the Tyneside Circle, Mr Michael Hannon; to the Coventry Circle, Peter Shiels.

We regret to announce the recent deaths of the following Newman members:

Mr Patrick Jones (Manchester and North Cheshire), Mrs Patricia Garrett (North Merseyside).

May these, and all other deceased members of our Association, rest in peace.

Postal addresses

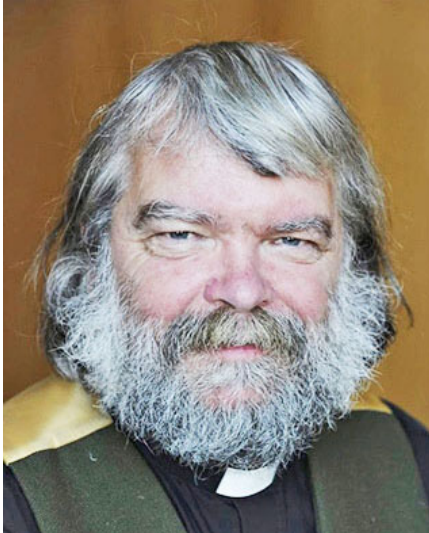
We don't want to lose touch with any members of *The Newman Association*! If you are moving house, please remember to send your new contact details to the Membership Registrar at membership@newman.org.uk

Patricia Egerton, Membership Registrar

Manchester Newman Lecture – May 15th, 2019

Laudato Si' and Samuel Taylor Coleridge

By Malcolm Guite, Fellow and Chaplain of Girton College, Cambridge,
author of *The Mariner: A Voyage with Samuel Taylor Coleridge**



*Malcolm Guite, Fellow and Chaplain of
Girton College, Cambridge*

I'm glad to be talking to the Newman Association. Newman is a very important figure for me and *The Idea of University* still has a great deal to say to universities today. Before I launch into the connection between Samuel Taylor Coleridge and *Laudato Si'* I would like to just note how another great writer – C S Lewis – observed that Newman had a particular interest in Coleridge's thought. Lewis said this: "Newman, in that ruinous master (Coleridge) saw one who restored our faculty for awe, who reimagined the soul's depth and height, who pricked with needles of eternal light an England at that time half-numbered to death with Payleigh's, Bentley's, Malthus' wintry breath."

Coleridge was giving England a wake-up call. "You are not seeing the world with

that faculty of awe which will allow you to resonate with it." One of the astonishing things about *Laudato Si'* as an encyclical is its concept of "integral" ecology, as Pope Francis wants to integrate ecological justice with social justice. He doesn't want the environment to be looked after at the expense of the poor. He sees that the same forces in society which devastate and trash beautiful habitats are the same forces that devastate and trash the people who live in them. But the most extraordinary example of integration within *Laudato Si'* is the integration of science and spirituality, in looking really hard at what the science is telling us about what we are doing to the earth and at the same time not allowing nature to be reduced to a mechanism which we can tweak and fiddle with – but allowing it to become a divine language.

Worlds which had split apart

Coleridge would certainly have approved. He was trying to bring together worlds which had split apart. There is a lovely throwaway line in one of Coleridge's letters in which he said he was off to one of Humphrey Davy's lectures "to increase my stock of metaphors". He saw scientific ideas as the very images with which we can now learn to think. One of the great achievements of the encyclical is that we are not simply stunned or depressed by the science but we have the opportunity to take the science up into poetry and spirituality and make something of it.

Laudato Si' has gained a wide readership, but significantly it is a wide readership beyond the Catholic Church since it offers a clear account of our current ecological

crisis and it offers some possible ways forward. Indeed, in the outset Pope Francis directs his words to all of us, not just to Catholics or even to Christians. He says: "In this encyclical I would like to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home." In fact, I would say that his dialogue is not just with his present readers but also with the past that has formed us, for good and ill. He draws on St Francis, on Bonaventure and on St Thomas Aquinas. I would like to reflect on another figure from the past, whom he does not cite at any point, but one whom I think at least in the imagination one could bring fruitfully into conversation with him. That is the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

Coleridge's thinking anticipates and confirms many of the insights in *Laudato Si'*. Indeed, *The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner* could be seen as a parabolic, or embodied, expression of many of the key insights of *Laudato Si'*. Let me briefly explore some of the parallels. I will try and give you what they call the executive summary. "By my long grey beard, wherefore stops thou me." It's an arresting opening. We are all held spellbound by the mariner's tale and perhaps, like the wedding guest, changed by it. Why am I hearing this story? We are, as it were, the wedding guests. I think Coleridge, very much by the end, wants you to reflect on what it should change in us. He has become a sadder and a wiser man by the end of the tale.

*It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
"By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?"*

What is the tale that is told? Well, like *The Odyssey* before it, it has the classic shape of a journey out and back again. It is an unnamed ship, on a journey the purpose of which we are never told, which leaves the familiar and sails south across the line into the southern hemisphere. It comes at last to the great ice floes of the Antarctic. The sailors are lost in fog and surrounded by ice (*"the ice was here, the ice was there"*). Coleridge had at the time of writing never set foot in a ship but he had read lots of accounts of the Antarctic ice. In his poem the sailors are surrounded by ice and they are befriended by an albatross, a mysterious bird which had been hailed by the men as a Christian soul. It guides the ship through the ice, round Cape Horn and into the unknown Pacific. The ice opens and they get a passage through. And then the bird perches on the mast *"for Vespers nine"*. At the very end of the story it will be the Vesper Bell that calls the mariner.

A terrible change

All is going well, and the albatross guides them through, but then the narrative of the poem is suddenly interrupted as the wedding guest, to whom the tale is being told, notices a terrible change in the Mariner's expression.

*"God save thee, ancient Mariner!
From the fiends, that plague thee thus!—
Why look'st thou so?"—With my cross-bow
I shot the ALBATROSS.*

The rest of the poem goes on to explore the profound spiritual and material consequences of this seemingly random deed. And as the poem proceeds it takes on the resonance and the spiritual significance of the primal fall of humankind, and the fall

of each of us. And the crew make themselves complicit in the deed by taking a purely instrumental view of the bird. It was right, they say, to slay the birds that brought the fog and mist. But then they said it was the albatross that was bringing the wind, so it shouldn't have been killed. But it never occurs to them that the albatross is not a single isolated thing that is there to be disposed of, but there is a link between the high-flying bird up above and the deep polar spirit beneath. So they have offended against an intricate web of which they really have no comprehension.

The albatross had its own life and meaning and eventually they learn, but only through the medium of a dream, that they have disturbed this balance, that they have disturbed the polar spirit. The poem goes on to tell of the death of the other sailors and of the survival of the mariner, alone, in an agony of helpless guilt and isolation, in which he curses himself and every other living thing, and in which he wishes only to die.

*And every tongue, through utter drought,
Was withered at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.*

And then we have an extraordinary scene of transformation, in which the Mariner is suddenly able to see the world anew, to see it without sole reference to himself, and in which he finally blesses the *"happy, living things"* against whose whole web of life he has offended. The rest of the poem tells of his growing spiritual awareness, his penance, the expiation of the curse, his visitation by angels and his final return, purged and transformed in the place where he began. It tells of a meeting with a friend, of the sacrament of confession, of the recovery of faith, and of a new mission to tell his transformative tale specifically to those who need to hear it. *"The moment that his face I see, I know the man must hear me, to him my tale I tell"*. That conversion of heart by the Mariner on those he meets, to whom he tells his tale, is summed up at the end of the poem into famous verses that forge a link between prayer and love – not just love for our own species but for the whole interrelated web of life, of which we are just one small part. *"Farewell, farewell, but this I tell to thee, thou wedding guest, he prayeth well who loveth well, both man and bird and beast, he loveth best all things, both great and small, for the dear God who loveth us, he made and loveth all"*. A phrase here was picked up by Mrs Cecil Alexander in a hymn but only with an emphasis on beautiful things.

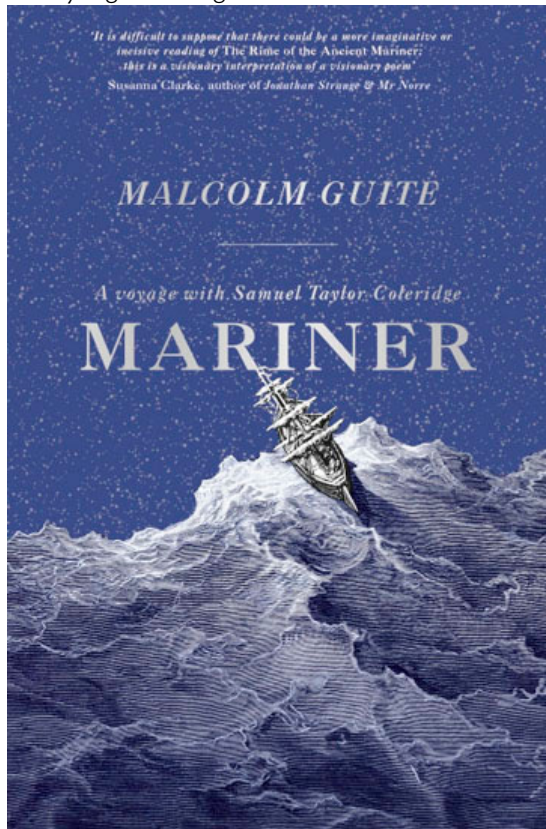
The web of life

In the poem, Coleridge has been precisely engaged with the feeling of revulsion that we have when we have turned our back on the web of life. *"A thousand thousand slimy things lived on, and so did I,"* and it's his ability to see those very things that he thought of as repugnant in a new life that changes him. And that's why that line is not trite when it comes at the end of the Mariner. But it's been retrospectively trited by Mrs Alexander in *"All Things Bright and Beautiful"*. God's love extends to all creatures, not just humankind, it is not anthropocentric. That is precisely the link which Pope Francis, following St Francis himself, establishes in *Laudato Si'*. So, returning to Coleridge's poem, astonishingly every one of those narrative elements that I have just listed can be paralleled in Coleridge's lines.

Like his Mariner, Coleridge endured the agony of loneliness, despair and suicidal

thoughts but also, like him, he survived the ordeal and was rewarded with a visionary experience of transfigured beauty in the world and returned from his own voyage to extremity – to Germany and Malta, in fact – with a new sense of purpose. Just as the Mariner met the pilot and the hermit at the moment his ship was sinking, and was rescued by them, so Coleridge was rescued from the shipwreck of opium addiction and despair by Dr James Gillman and he lived with him for the last years of his life, famously at 3, The Grave, Highgate. Basically they invented rehab together.

I turned up one day at 3, The Grave. It happened to be hallowe'en and a dark and stormy night. I thought, before I knocked on the door, that I had better check who lived



there. In fact it was Kate Moss, the model, not the novelist. At this point, I'm afraid, courage failed me. I thought, dodgy vicar calls on supermodel, I just didn't want to go there.

Coleridge lived with Gillman for the last years of his life. In that final phase Coleridge became, like his Mariner, a life-transforming teacher sharing a spiritual vision which linked life, love and prayer with a new humility towards God and Nature. He wrote extraordinary works, a lay sermon, and philosophical lectures, and was working on a kind of general theory of life, and he promised that it was going to include a commentary on the life of the Ancient Mariner, but of course it was among his unwritten works.

Not surprisingly, later in his life, Coleridge came to identify himself with The Mariner. Yet when he wrote the poem he had never even been to sea and none

*The cover picture of Malcolm Guite's book**

of these adventures had befallen him. So in my book *Mariner** I came to investigate how it was that Coleridge's tale could have been so symbolically prophetic not only in what was to come in his life but also of the ecological crisis which we are currently facing and of the way we can solve it.

I found that in one sense Coleridge had answered this question in a remarkable passage in the biography *Literaria* which he published in 1817. Here is what Coleridge had to say: "They, and only they, can acquire the philosophic imagination, the sacred power of self-intuition, who within themselves can interpret and understand the

symbol that the wings of the air-sylph are forming within the skin of the caterpillar. The same instinct that impels the chrysalis of the hornet fly to leave room in its involucre for antennae yet to come. They know and feel that the potential works in them even as the actual works on them." It's an extraordinary passage. Now, isn't it an interesting analogy for the whole role and imagination of the creative arts in which we human beings come to know things? Mathematicians and scientists will tell you this, that you can imagine something before you have done the maths and the role of the imagination is to carve out a space into which you will grow your antennae, and the antennae are precisely those organs which you will use to discover your knowledge of the world. What Coleridge is proposing is that the imagination is working sympathetically and intuitively with the other means of knowing.



LAUDATO SI

POPE FRANCIS



All our thinking depends on our observation of all the diverse things in the world. Just think, for a moment, about thinking about anything without drawing on a metaphor of a tree. You think about putting down roots, you think about branches of learning, about family trees; aimlessly we need to look to a tree to understand the way we think. Now, there's great passage in *Laudato Si'* where Pope Francis says one of the reasons we need biodiversity is that we must resist commercial pressure to clear the forests or drain the seas in order to catch the one fish or to grow the one crop that happens to be money-making at the moment, whether it is palm oil or cod or whatever, and meantime we destroy we know not how many other things. Pope Francis points out that those might be our future medicines, they might be where the penicillin of the next generation is going to come from. But actually I would say that our very ability to think at all is impaired if we don't have those creatures teaching us how to think.

That whole realm which is our spiritual inheritance, the insights of the saints and the mystics, these things are there with a wisdom which we may not yet have fully grown into. We shouldn't abandon those insights because we haven't yet put our antennae out fully. And one of the things I applaud about *Laudato Si'* is the way he draws upon people like Bonaventure alongside the latest science.

Coleridge tells the story of a journey which starts with these high hopes and good

spirits and leads to a terrifying encounter with human fallibility, with darkness, alienation, loneliness, dread, then repentance and a profound experience of prayer. That was the trajectory of Coleridge's own life, but it also contains and illustrates many elements in the Pope's account of what has become of humanity: how we have been alienated from and are destroying our common home, how we might come to our senses and see things transfigured and beautiful again, and how we might recover.

So let us bring *Laudato Si'* into the conversation with Coleridge. What Coleridge raises is the question of what is our relationship with the natural world? Is it a sacred web of exchange, of which we are only one small part? Or is it simply an agglomeration of stuff which we can use at will for our own purposes? When the Mariner shoots the albatross and the crew judge the deed solely on the basis of whether the deed brings them good or bad weather they have taken an instrumental rather than a sacral view of nature. The albatross is not considered to have an intrinsic nature, or rights, in itself but is merely an instrument which might assist human beings to their own ends.

In one sense the terrible curse that falls upon the ship and its crew, and the dreadful experience of loneliness and alienation suffered by the Mariner, are a consequence of this instrumental view of nature. But in a deeper sense the instrumental view is itself the curse: there can be no blessing or release until the Mariner experiences a radical conversion of heart and mind, in which he can look out from the ship at the other living things and bless them and love them for themselves, without reference to a private or even purely human agenda. Coleridge later would work on this question philosophically.

Insights of Pope St John Paul II

Quite early on in *Laudato Si'* the Pope raises this issue. He renews some of the insights of his predecessor Pope St John Paul II who became increasingly concerned about it, and in his first encyclical he warned that human beings frequently seem to see no other meaning in their natural environment than what serves for immediate use and consumption. Subsequently he called for a global ecological conversion and he noted that little had been done to safeguard the moral conditions for an authentic human ecology. He went on: "It is not enough, however, to think of different species merely as potential resources to be exploited, while overlooking the fact that they have value in themselves. Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which our children will never see. Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God". That's really powerful.

And so in Section 69 he says: "Each creature is an end in itself, and an expression of God's goodness, not something that is simply there to serve humanity. Each creature possesses its own particular goodness and perfection. Each of the various creatures will, in its own being, reflect in its own way a ray of God's infinite wisdom and goodness. Man must therefore respect the particular goodness of every creature to avoid any disordered use of things. You see how he is bringing faith and a kind of radical mysticism to bear on the very question of biodiversity. That's why I admire the integrated thinking that's going on in this encyclical.

To return to Coleridge's poem, we have seen that the Mariner cannot achieve release until he has experienced a radical conversion of heart and mind in which he can look out from the deck of the ship at the other living things and bless them and love them for themselves. So how does that come about in the poem and how might it come

about for us? The transformation – redemption – of the Mariner finally occurs in part four of the poem when at last the Mariner looks out at the other marine creatures, which he despised as “a thousand slimy things”, and he sees them in the light of the moon and in the light of God’s grace as happy, living things. *“I looked upon the rotting sea, and drew my eyes away. I looked upon the rotting deck, and there the dead men lay. I looked to heaven and tried to pray.”*

Complete Isolation

The core of all this agony and isolation is for the Mariner, as it would be for Coleridge, the inability to pray. Having broken the threads of communication at a horizontal level between himself and his fellow creatures the Mariner now finds that the vertical axis, the thread of connection with the divine in prayer, is also broken. His isolation is complete. Only after seven days of agony for him do we get the first indications of change. The symbol that accompanies these changes is the living moon. Coleridge makes an important reference to the “moving moon” and that the moon is cause of movements in others and the tides and that it also moves us, in the inner space of our hearts. But accompanying the verse is a later gloss, added twenty years after the first edition. *“In his loneliness and fixedness he yearneth towards the journeying moon and the stars that still move onward”*. It acts as a kind of premonition of the redemption which is to come.

At his lowest he is absolutely at zero point, yet just at the point where his own journey seems endless we have this gloss taking him from journeying to homecoming. Words like “belong” and “rest”, “natural home”, leading to a “silent joy of arrival”, they reflect on the joy in heaven for each sinner who repents. The redemption of the Mariner can only come from a recognition of the truth which he had denied when he shot the albatross: the truth that all creatures are God’s and not his. It’s as though by seeing these creatures in moonlight that he sees them as God sees them.

*I pass, like night, from land to land;
I have strange power of speech;
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me:
To him my tale I teach.*

In *Laudato Si’*, the big question raised is how, in the midst of our technological culture, are we to recover that authentic humanity? How are we to recover the vision of beauty and find the creative imagination required to achieve that new synthesis? Again, I think we can look to Coleridge for some of the answers. He wrote that he had been trying to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural by awakening the mind’s attention to the lethargy of custom, and directing it towards the loveliness and the



Samuel Taylor Coleridge

wonders of the world before us, an inexhaustible treasure – but for which we have eyes that see not, ears that hear not and hearts that neither feel nor understand. The key word is “awakening”. And eventually, I think, in these last few months we have been coming towards an awakening in terms of understanding what climate change means and what we need to do in the next ten years if we are not to be the generation that betrayed all its future generations; if we are not to have our children and our grandchildren look at us with bewildered, accusing and desperate eyes: *How did you do this to us?*

*Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.*

*He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.*

**Mariner: A Voyage with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, by Malcolm Guite, published by Hodder & Stoughton, £14.99 (paperback)*

Children of Abraham, York

The intensive study sessions at the Living Theology Conference on **Children of Abraham – Interfaith Topics** - at the Bar Convent, York, on July 13th and 14th were greatly enjoyed. Fr Damian Howard covered various aspects of *Islam* over two days, and Gabriel Webber talked on *British Jews and Judaism*.

Dr George Herring discussed *Newman and the Oxford Movement*, as reported in more detail on page 7 of this issue.

There were also talks on *Islamic architecture in Spain* and *The Psalms, the prayer of the synagogue and the Church*. The conference was jointly sponsored by the Newman Association and it is hoped that another conference will be arranged next year



Fr Damian Howard, Provincial of the Jesuits in Britain, speaking on Islamic law and society

From Augustine to the White Fathers

The Year of Thamar's Book by Lucy Beckett; Published by Gracewing, £20.00.

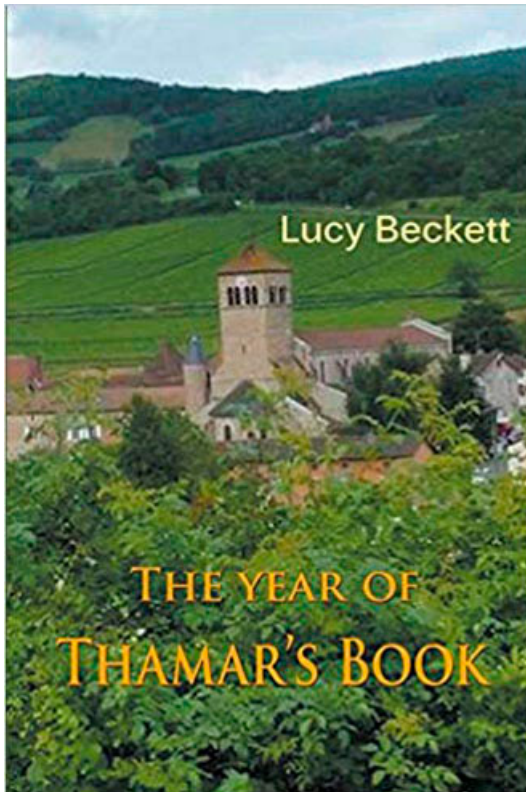
I am writing this review because I feel that other members of the Newman Association may find as much satisfaction as I did in reading a novel which, whilst relating the relationship between a grandfather and his grandson, describes two spiritual journeys. Both of these journeys are set in a cultural landscape with little respect for its religious inheritance. One is set in the context of recent French colonial history, whilst the other takes place between the Charlie Hebdo bombing in Paris in January 2015 and the Requiem mass, in July of 2016, for Jacques Hamel, the priest who was murdered by IS sympathisers whilst saying mass in a Normandy Village.

Macon to Algeria

The story describes the developing love between just-graduated Bernard and his just-discovered grandfather, Thamar. Thamar, baptized "Thomas", has been brought up in a small village in the Macon region where in 1940 Vichy France he was abandoned to the care of his grandmother, a widow of the Great War. In 1960 he leaves the Macon to work in a Paris bookshop, and from there he is called up into the French Army. That Army is struggling to maintain order in an Algeria which is involved in a bloody struggle to forge its future. Thamar is wounded, cared for by a Berber family

and through them develops a respect for Islam. Until 2015 he is unaware that he has also fathered a daughter – Bernard's mother. In middle life he returns to Algeria as a White Father. The reader first meets Thamar as a reclusive old man living in the house in which he has been nurtured.

Bernard, by contrast, has grown up in a Parisian family which takes its intellectual, post-Christian, direction from a determinedly rationalist father, a teacher at a Paris Lycee. His mother, born in France but of Algerian Berber descent, is secretary to the school's principal. Bernard is introduced to the reader during the final weeks of his degree studies in Nantes, where he is seeking to discern his future path. He sacrifices a day from carefully scheduled revision to journey to the Macon to meet the grandfather he has never known. After graduation he



agrees to edit Thamar's rambling autobiographical notes. Through these notes Bernard becomes aware of Thamar's spiritual struggles but has no framework in which to place and understand them. Thamar seeks to guide Bernard by sparse conversation, by suggesting cycle rides to sites of church history and through directed reading, mainly of Augustine. (Thamar has two great heroes Augustine – the Algerian Berber theologian, and Cardinal Lavigerie, who founded the White Fathers.) In a characteristic section he suggests that, despite chronology, Augustine's world is much closer than Aquinas' to our own, because Augustine lived when the fashionable philosophers had little time for Christianity whereas Aquinas lived in a time when his family, teachers and students were all Christians.

Lucy Beckett, the book's author, has spoken to the Cleveland Newman Circle on a number of occasions. Her earlier compilation "In the Light of Christ" (Ignatius Press, San Francisco) makes evident her enthusiasm for the writings of Augustine. I do not, yet, fully share this enthusiasm, but "The Year of Thamar's Book" left me with a message of hope and led me to return to Augustine's "Confessions" during Lent 2019. So, for me, this book worked.

Terry Egerton

Mary: did she thunder as well as ponder?

Mary and Early Christian Women by Ally Kateusz, Palgrave Macmillan, £20.00
(available free as a downloaded e-book)

The image built by the Church over the centuries around Mary, the mother of Jesus, is nowadays clearly defined: she was meek, mild and submissive. But modern feminists are not at all happy with this characterisation, nor with the down-playing of the clearly important role played by many women in the early Church. This book – with the subtitle *Hidden Leadership* – comes out of the Wijngaards Institute for Catholic Research in London, founded by a man but a stronghold of feminism, and currently heavily promoting arguments for opening the priesthood to women.

Certainly Mary had a strong character. Luke's gospel portrays her reciting a socialist propaganda hymn – "*He has pulled down princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly...the rich he sent empty away.*" She started Jesus off on his mission at the wedding in Cana. She became an important public figure: there are fifteen references to Mary in the Koran, and she is the only woman individually named in the whole Islamic holy book.

Prominent women

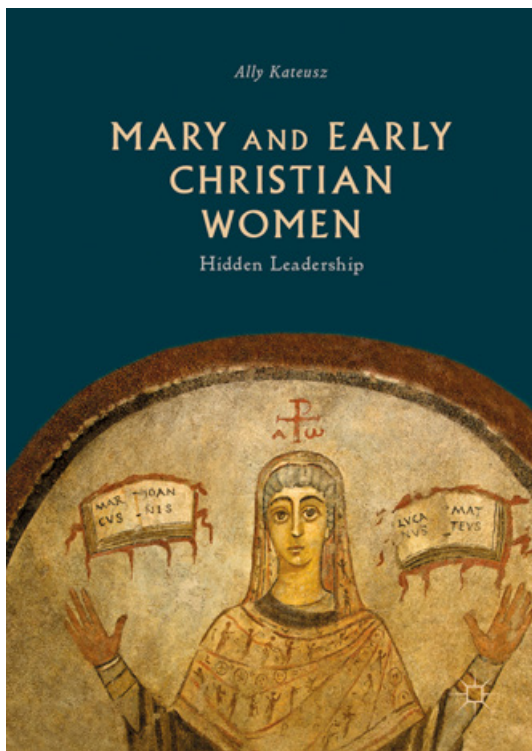
Ally Kateusz, a research associate at the Wijngaards Institute, sets out to show that many women, not just Mary, were prominent at the outset of Christianity. She argues that women had the status of leaders in worship. Early portraits often showed Mary with her arms raised in the mode of a liturgical leader. But by the Middle Ages artistic convention had changed radically, to show Mary as a submissive character often looking passively at the floor. The gospels also give prominence to the other Mary, the one from from Magdalene, but her precise role is unclear. Over 2,000 years she

has been a permanent focus for rumour and speculation, ranging from a flawed status as a reformed prostitute to even being Jesus's lover, at any rate for credulous readers of Dan Brown.

The book moves erratically through time and gives a lot of space to early Christian artwork. An important theme is that the role of women in the early Church – where there is evidence that some had the status of bishops – has been systematically suppressed, for instance by scribes shortening or omitting passages when copying them. The author therefore likes to find the longest possible editions of ancient documents because they are likely to be the least tampered with.

She covers many old documents which survive from the canonical chaos of the early Church. The *Protevangelium*, which includes many details of Mary's life, still exists, as part of the Gospel of James, but there was also allegedly a separate *Gospel of Mary* which has disappeared, apart from a few fragments. Dr Kateusz is determined to make her case for the pioneering leadership role of early Christian women. The evidence is, to say the least, controversial and selective, but she claims these old secrets have enormous power and "no church can exclude women from its leadership and remain true to its origins".

Certainly the campaign by the modern Catholic Church against feminists has been unrelenting. Notoriously, Pope St John Paul II in 1994 in *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* declared that "The Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women" and banned all further discussion. But as time has gone on the Catholic Church has found it harder and harder to recruit priests from its target population of young, celibate men. In contrast the Church of England has attracted more than 5,000 women to the priesthood. That may suggest a hidden fear of the men at the top of the Catholic Church: that if women are allowed in they will quickly take effective control. Meanwhile the rise of feminist thinking in secular culture is now doing great damage to the male-dominated Church. Take the sexual abuse scandal; traditionally the Church has paid little regard to child sexual abuse, categorising it as a trivial matter to be dealt with, if at all, in the confessional. But now it is regarded in many countries as one of the most serious areas of criminality and numerous priests, and even an abbot



and a cardinal, have been given long prison sentences while the American Church, in particular, has had to pay out enormous sums in compensation to victims.

Our own Cardinal Vincent Nichols was recently criticised by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse for covering up abuse rather than reporting it to the police, when he was Archbishop of Birmingham. The Bishops of England and Wales, after a three-day meeting with abuse survivors last May, acknowledged “our slowness and defensiveness”.

The Church’s focus

Doctrinally the Church has focused almost entirely on heterosexual relationships and specifically on procreation. It regards abortion as a great evil. According to the feminist perspective, however, this is a masculine attempt to protect the children of fathers, whereas it is the superior right of women to decide whether they bear the children or not. Even in traditionally Catholic countries such as Ireland the Church’s ruling on abortion is now being disregarded.

Enormous clashes of opinion are being opened up here. On homosexuality (a subject which Jesus ignored) the Church is struggling to come to a clear view beyond saying that it is “disordered”, while we have to wonder why the feminist movement is so casual about the rights of the unborn while at the same time being so fierce about the sexual abuse of children. It is not surprising that in conditions of moral turmoil there are awkward contradictions.

This book is an attempt to draw support for modern feminism from fragmented evidence dating from the early Church. But it will be the progressive collapse of the male priesthood that will dictate the course of the Church’s development in the 21st century.

Barry Riley

Your e-mail address

Many communications by e-mail are simpler and cheaper! If you are a member of The Newman Association and can use e-mail, could you please let the Association have your up-to-date e-mail address so that we can keep in closer touch with everyone? This information will be used only for communications on Association business, and on matters likely to be of interest to our members. It will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, in accordance with GDPR regulations. **Please send and/or confirm your e-mail address to Council Member Alex Mthobi, using Newman.Association@yahoo.com. “**

Circle Programmes

ALL Circles

2-9 September Judaism and Christianity in First Century Rome

Pilgrimage to Rome

London & SE Circles

7 December Advent day of Recollection, Tyburn Convent

Fr Robin Burgess

Birmingham

Contact: Winifred Flanagan, winifredflanagan@gmail.com

- 14 September Holiness in the world" the life of John Henry Newman *David McLaughlin*
19 October Edith Stein *Canon David Evans*
2 November Morning meeting -TBA *Liam Blackwood*
7 December Vaughan a Poet of Borderlands *Dr Robert Wilcher*

Cleveland

Contact: Judith Brown, 01642 814977, browns01@globalnet.co.uk

- 18 September Blood of Martyrs, Seed of Church Unity: ARCIC & Receptive Ecumenism
- significant progress? *The Very Revd Dom Henry Wansbrough OSB*
23 October Laity and Ministry: Women, Men and Ministry *Teresa Saunders*
27 November He Talked the Talk and He Walked the Walk: St Oscar Romero, Bishop
and Martyr *Julian Filochowski OBE*

Coventry

Contact: Colin Roberts cjroberts08@talktalk.net

- 10 September Autumn Mass and Party
24 September A Harp of Many Chords *Rev Fr. Peter Conley*
9 October Morning Prayer at the Chapel of Unity, Coventry Cathedral to celebrate
the feast of Blessed John Henry Newman
22 October Practicing One's Faith through Politics *Jane Knight*
3 November Joint Mass and lunch with students at Warwick University
26 November On being a Catholic in the public arena *Dr Philip McCarthy*

Ealing

Contact: Kevin Clarke Kevin.Clarke@keme.co.uk

- 26 September Philosophical, Psychological and Educational perspectives on the
contribution of experience to communicating belief *Jean Harrison*
31 October Parish Catechesis and the Sacraments *Daniel Ferguson*
21 November The Challenge of running a Catholic School in 2019 *Andrew Johnson*
12 December Ecumenical service and reception to celebrate the Canonization of St John
Henry Newman

Eastbourne & Bexhill

Contact: John Carmody, 01323 726334, johnmh22@outlook.com

Edinburgh

Contact: Lyn Cronin, lyncronin@btinternet.com

- 24 September Different Lives in History: the Catholic Irish in Scotland and the USA
Professor Sir Tom Devine
22 October Film *John Henry Newman*
12 November Images of God *Fr Chris Hughes*
10 December Faith sharing evening

Glasgow

Contact: Arthur McLay, mclay@btinternet.com

- 19 October Mass for opening of Circle 2019-2020 session
31 October The Scottish Sectarian Divide: Perception and Reality in Our Confusing
Times *Dr Michael Rosie*
28 November Justice and Peace (title to be confirmed) *Bishop William Nolan*

Hertfordshire

Contact: Priscilla O'Reilly, 01727 864404, pear738@gmail.com

- 15 September Medical Ethics; a doctor's perspective *Dr Mary McHugh*
23 September Newman Book Club
11 October Mass & Lunch to celebrate the Canonization of John Henry Newman
19 October Musical evening
30 November Papal Infallibility *Professor Thomas O' Loughlin*

London

Contact: Patricia, 0208 504 2017

Manchester & N. Cheshire

Contact: Chris Quirke, 0161 941 1707 dcq@mac.com

North Gloucestershire

Contact: Stephanie Jamison, 01242 539810, sjamison@irlen-sw.com

1 October The Church in Kerala *Fr Tony Pazhayakalam*5 November Equipes Notre Dame, An international Catholic Movement for Christian Married Couples
*Paul & Helena McCloskey*3 December Women in the Penal Period 1534-c1700 *Christopher Robson***North Merseyside**

Contact: John Potts, john_potts41@hotmail.com

19 September Island Parishes: the Challenge of Parish Life *Mgr P Fleetwood*17 October An Apostolic Nuncio in Cairo *Cardinal Michael Fitzgerald*27 October Lunch to celebrate the canonization of Blessed John Henry Newman with speaker
*Rev Dr Canon Rod Gardiner*21 November The Chartres Pilgrimage *Fr Ian Verrier and Pilgrims***Rainham**

Contact: Marie Casey, bmcasey@btinternet.com

8 September Reading Group

13 October Music in the Church *John Wilkins*

10 November Reading Group

8 December Reading Group

Surrey Hills

Contact: Deirdre Waddington, deidre@dwarchitect.co.uk

Swansea

Contact: Prof Mike Sheehan, m.sheehan@swansea.ac.uk

Tyneside

Contact: Terry Wright, terry.wright@newcastle.ac.uk

25 September Clericalism: A 'Cancer' in the Church? *Michael Kerrigan*

12 October Newman: a Saint for our Time?

*Fr. Andrew Downie, Professor Terry Wright and Dr Sheridan Gilley*27 November Catholic Social Teaching *Louise Harrison***Wimbledon**

Contact: Bill Russell, 0208 946 4265, william_russell@talktalk.net

Worcester

Contact: Heather Down, 01905 21535, hcdown@gmail.com

19 September Newman – A Journey to Sainthood *Revd Douglas Lamb*17 October The Caring that Jesus Illustrates *Christine Dodd*13 November How do we keep on hoping – lessons from the Middle East
The Revd Timothy Radcliffe OP

5 December Christmas Quiz

Wrexham

Contact: Maureen Thomas, maureenthomas@uwclub.net

27 September Climate Change *Professor Tom Rippeth*25 October Encounters with Hebrew Scripture *David Savage*29 November The Bible and Disability *Professor Wayne Morris***York**

Contact: Judith Smeaton, 01904 704525, judith.smeaton@btinternet.com

16 September The changing ethics of family law *Judith Daley*

8 October Pax Christi and our struggle together to be peacemakers

*Theresa Alessandro*21 October Christianity and Zen *Canon Christopher Collingwood*