CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

John Henry Newman was indeed a phenomenon in the religious and literary scene of the nineteenth century. He was the amalgamation of theologian, historian, essayist, autobiographer, novelist, editor and a poet. He was the leader of a revolution in religious thought in the Christian world. As a man of vision and foresight, with his eyes on the present, he wrote for posterity. Through his writings, he spoke with intensity and insight, and challenged his contemporaries to belief. He was litterateur with a difference, being one of the few geniuses of his day, who employed his literary gift for the cause of revealed Religion. The profound religious experience he had at fifteen, geared his attention to the dogmas of the Christian faith.

In an age of spiritual doubts and decadence, when scientific claims had dethroned God, Newman showed that Christianity can stand its ground; that no force can smother the quest for the truth. In him, there was the constant desire, a singleness of purpose, the zeal to seek truth, and once he got possession, held on to it, lived by it, and persuaded others to broaden their mind and assent to it. He gave up his life for the sake of truth and was willing to pay the price. In the Apologia, he proclaims to the world that he “loved honesty better than name, and Truth better than dear friends” (82)

Newman was in search of a complete faith and belief system, and so he finally decided for the Roman Catholic Church. It was not that he did not love the Anglican Church. The truth was that the Anglican Newman
was left to search for true faith; he was a pilgrim in the dark night, and far from home. The Roman Catholic Newman discovered that he was to surrender completely to faith and find everything in it. In the complete assent to faith in his heart and mind, he declares in the *Apologetia*; "I have been in perfect peace and contentment. I never have had one doubt" (275). He felt deeply tranquil, like coming to port after a rough sea. It was not that Newman became a Catholic to find peace, on the contrary, he had more interpersonal conflicts as a Catholic; but the truth is that he made fewer compromises. He was of a temperament that was more tortured by compromise than quarrel, and so found peace in the Church of Rome.

Being present to his time as part of its history, he was possessed with a prophetic vision. Newman lived with a tremendous energy and fearless honesty. And with his integrity of life, he dared to challenge a nation, a Church and an age. The movement he led continued to exert its influence on art, literature, music and religion, past many years his accession to Roman Catholicism. The honest and daring path he took to Rome continues to be trodden by many of his countrymen in our days.

Newman did not insulate himself, but responded sensitively to the human predicaments and existential experiences. Always alert to the social, political and religious temper of his days, he refused to compromise, to conform, to be intimidated and to be confined. He was a giant in thought and action, and sought to transform his environment. His concern for his fellow human beings was directed to the whole person - the spiritual and corporeal being. He was one with humanity in every aspect; its joys, pains, sacrifices, partings, friendships and conflicts. The whole Newman suffered in the midst of trials, cried out in pain, felt disappointed with failures and suffered the deaths of loved ones, and at the same time resolutely accepted the will of God.
Growth and change in all aspects of life marked the Victorian era, which was indeed an awful period of transition. An agrarian society, with strong traditional values and social hierarchy was suddenly transformed into a stimulated and unsettled society, by the unprecedented growth in science, technology, industry, urbanization and population. There was a profound questioning of politics, morality and religion. With Utilitarianism helping the growth of materialism, Mammon came to replace the God of Revelation, and Religion was negated by Science. The Victorians no longer felt the need of God, as science was apparently answering their quests. Hence, a conflict between Science and Religion emerged, resulting in religious doubts, loss of faith, and agnosticism. This conflict confronted everyone: clergymen, essayists, novelists, poets, dramatists, politicians and the common people. The young Victorians were the ones who keenly recognised the emergence of the new complexities, brought about by the modernisation of towns that left everyone anonymous, inhumane, and faithless.

The poets turned out to be the best interpreters of the age’s complexities. They adopted different attitudes and approaches to address the Victorian dilemma. The Victorian poets, whatever their personal beliefs and allegiances, wrote poems essentially religious. Tennyson, Browning and Arnold, the trio representatives of the Victorian age, being confronted with their age’s dilemma, anxiety, doubt and complexity, responded to them in their unique ways. Tennyson sought a reasonable optimism to answer his doubts, and navigated a compromise between Science and Religion. Browning came forcefully with unbounded optimism. He witnessed God as Love, and Love as a panacea to the century’s illness. Matthew Arnold could not free himself from his doubts and ran into melancholy and despair, and demonstrated a negative
The differences in the mode of confronting the Victorian Conflict were due to their temperament, the choices of life and world views. Tennyson was
well acquainted with the scientific advancements, and was essentially a believer. He had his fears but believed in Christianity. He was willing to make space for science without sacrificing his faith. Browning had faith in the meaning of life and was a happy man in the depth of his being. His faith in the goodness, intensity and hopefulness of man’s existence was very solid and deep, to the extent that no physical or spiritual calamity could shake. Arnold donned the pessimistic garb compelled by his liberal attitude towards religion and the high intellectual temper he was exposed to. But he was determined not to be overcome by the melancholy indulgence in self questioning. Newman had with him deep religiosity and a high ideal, a sort of a diffident holiness, to assist him in the midst of the conflicts raging round him.

The effort of the study had been to examine the life and select works of Newman in the light of the Victorian Conflict. Hence, an attempt had been made to define the concept of Victorian Conflict and to discuss the factors responsible for it. A special mention had been made of the Oxford Movement to indicate the leadership role of Newman in the religious revival envisaged in the movement. In this connection, the concept of conflict itself had been analysed with emphasis on the intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts, thereby suggesting some ways of resolving conflict. Based on the understanding of the concept of conflict, the experiences of conflict in Newman’s personal life with references to the intrapersonal conflict and interpersonal conflict had been examined quite exhaustively. The study has made an effort to demonstrate the elements of conflict in his select works, which were characterised and categorised under novels, prose pieces, sermons and poems. For a better understanding of the Victorian Conflict and to discover the way other Victorian literary
figures have handled the issue, I have included a comparative study of the three representative poets of the age, viz. Tennyson, Browning and Arnold. The study of John Henry Newman in this thesis has tried to throw light into Newman’s literary contributions and made Newman readable to a student of literature. Newman’s place in the English literature had been asserted and claimed; but essentially, he is better known and studied in the theological circle. Nevertheless, he was a literary genius with a persuasive and convincing style; therefore, an attempt has been made here to show that Newman can be studied as a litterateur par excellence in the universities and colleges. His monumental works The Idea of a University and An Essay in Aid of the Grammar of Assent can very well be respectively, a literary text and a philosophical text in a University curriculum.

Newman at times can be a paradox. It is possible to draw up an index of scepticism in the writings of Newman on one hand, but on the other hand, there are also sufficient writings to prove the validity and tenacity of his faith. At times he appears inconsistent in his thinking. He showed himself opposed to liberalism and rationalism, but we also find that he advocated liberal education and liberal catholicity, and he believed that reason and knowledge are the ministers of faith. However, a careful holistic study will show consistency in his thoughts; a consistency that is held together by the pursuit of truth, and the whole hearted defence of the Revealed Religion.

His writings are rich in philosophy and theology; hence, a lay reader will find them quite obscure and difficult to comprehend. Nevertheless, a faith-filled enlightened study will unravel a rich mine of knowledge for inspired living. Newman’s sermons are great store of spiritual wealth
which had edified and inspired his generation and will continue to edify and inspire our generation too.

Newman lived and thought from a higher ground above materialism, rationalism, empiricism, liberalism, agnosticism and atheism. These philosophies haunting the religious minds of the Victorian age tended to undermine, disparage, ridiculed, or denied God, Religion, Church and eternal life. Newman contested these trends and demonstrated in his writings and sermons that beyond the physical realities, there are realities far superior, elegant and beautiful, than the things the senses can grasp. He affirmed that despite the rampant materialistic, consumerist, and utilitarian ethos which shelf God or banish Him from life’s operation, it is possible to believe or assent to what we cannot understand; and that one can assent to what cannot be absolutely proved. Newman’s life is a journey of faith which has a moral as well as a rational component.

He considered the spirit of Liberalism in religion as a kind of the infidelity of the time. He was alive to it and often had fierce thoughts against it. He led the Oxford Movement in a battle against it. Seeing that Liberalism was tending towards secularism, he undertook the task of steering a course between the conservatives, who spurned the social and scientific achievements of the age, and the so-called philosophic Christians, who found Revelation as a shackle. The secularising force of rationalism and liberalism obstructed him personally from being more extravagantly religious than he would have been if he had been in a religious country. As an Anglican, in opposition to the spirit of liberalism, he championed the cause of dogma; but as a Catholic he found dogma secure while critical theology was threatened, so he championed theology because he saw the bond between the two.
Newman showed and lived the desire for the meeting of mind and heart. For him a life of faith involves the whole person; it is the mind and heart journeying together. His pursuit was “holiness before peace,” a maxim borrowed from Thomas Scott. He believed that all are called to holiness. Of course, at times he seemed diffident towards holiness, for he had expressed that he has nothing of a saint since literary men love classics and saints are not literary men. He contented himself to be given the honour of blacking the shoes of the saints. Such humility was a mark of holiness. Benedict XVI proposed Newman as the model for England. He said in his homily; “Cardinal Newman’s motto, Cor ad cor loquitor, or ‘Heart speaks unto heart,’ gives us an insight into his understanding of the Christian life as call to holiness, experienced as the profound desire of the human heart to enter into intimate communion with the heart of God” (qtd. in Moynihan 4).

The priests of today would find a model in Newman to be ideal priests and pastors. The singleness of purpose in life, the willingness to assent to truth and the option for the holiness of life are characteristics that he bequeathed to his fellow pastors. He encountered the struggle of living by the truth and propagating it to the minds and hearts of others. His time was simply irreligious, and to this situation, he was called to be a pastor (Norris 4). Benedict XVI at his beatification had pointed out that Newman is a pastor, because he was simple, fallible man, able to have compassion on the fallible and sinful human beings, while continuously inviting them to a better, higher, holier and more abundantly joyful way of life (Moynihan 4). As a pastor, he had convictions in his heart and looked towards God, looked at God, and he called on people to look at the same direction. He nourished his flock with the Word and Sacraments. The priests of today can look to him for inspiration.
Newman's life was an adventure of faith, a holy journey towards God, thereby living by the beatitudes, which consists in a radical choice of God as the ideal of life and the goal of all exertions. Paul VI described the journey traced out by Newman as “the greatest, the most meaningful, the most conclusive traced during the nineteenth century, perhaps even during the whole modern period” (qtd. in Norris 6). His life of total surrender to God's holy Will, so untouched by worldly ambitions no matter the sacrifice he had to make.

Honest, truthful, integrated, dedicated life is admired and acknowledge as it casts ripples in the pool of life. The lives of great men and women teach humanity important lessons of believing in the power of the dream. Consciously or unconsciously they influence lives. Newman himself believed that “Persons influence us, voices melt us, looks subdue us, deeds inflame us” (Grammar 93). His personal life was an inspiration to many in his life time and after, even in our century. Matthew Arnold wrote to Newman in 1872 that among the four people from whom he had consciously learnt habits, methods and ruling, Newman is one among them, the others being Goethe, Wordsworth, and Sainte-Beuve (James 14). Arnold admired in Newman the “cultivation and chastity of intelligence, delicacy of taste and perception, a certain aesthetic feeling for conduct, the right union of intelligence and passion, courtesy and candour of bearing, the habit of resort to irony, not anger; all these things and more: everything that education can give a man: the ideal of the world” (15). Newman possessed a magnetic and persuasive personality. He had a capacity for friendship, and with his charm and sensitivity he could rally around him great many men. Wherever he was, be it as a tutor at Oriel, or as the preacher at St. Mary's, or at the house of Littlemore, or at the Oratory of Maryvale, he attracted followers. Another poet and co-religionist who was
influenced by him was G. M. Hopkins, who was attracted to Newman’s *Grammar of Assent*, for the “articulate point that belief in God is not based solely on logical inferences, but primarily on real awareness of the human condition.” God is encountered in the reality of existence and this is faith (Downes 88).

The influence of Newman has crossed seas and mountains, and he is admired, read and studied in France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Holland, Australia, New Zealand and America. His influence is seen in the theology of Joseph Ratzinger, the present Pope Benedict XVI. His understanding of the papal authority and the development of doctrine is derived from Newman (Rowland, http://www.abc.net.au/).

His writings had influenced thoughts and lives and would continue to inspire. His contemporaries read his writings; some to criticise and some to be inspired, but to all open minds they had a message, a call to conversion and faith and to seek the truth. His poem “Lead, Kindly Light” is a sure guide to all who sincerely seek the truth and spiritual guidance, irrespective of caste, creed, or philosophical differences. Mahatma Gandhi derived great inspiration and strength in it and recommended it to a correspondent who found hard to believe in God to make the poem his prayer (George 29). Gandhi often sang the hymn and found an inspiration for his *Satyagraha*. He found in the poem of Newman, a prayer to God who is a guide and teacher, and who invites the devotee to social action. The pursuit and adherence to Truth is a common characteristic in Newman and Mahatma Gandhi.

Interestingly, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the eminent Indian philosopher and statesman shared the view of Newman with regard to the mutual relationship between Reason and Faith:
A philosopher’s loyalty to reason does not commit him to the proposition that the nature of Ultimate Reality can be apprehended only as an object of reason. Many philosophers both in the East and in the West have reached the conclusion that reality is super-rational, that it is not in its ultimate nature accessible to conceptual understanding, that religious insights are also genuine revelation of Ultimate Reality (qtd. in D’Souza 35).

Newman approached the conflicts that were plaguing his century with the holiness of life, a willingness to believe in God, and finding reasons to believe. He was definite about the two supreme and luminously self-evident beings, himself and his Creator (Apologia 98). He will continue to proclaim that it would be hard not to believe in God, because our minds, the voice of humankind and the world (plants, animals, and human beings) make it possible to know him. Rajendra Prabhu wrote, that the physicist and cosmologist Dr. Stephen Hawking, in his latest book The Grand Design, “contends in essence that the design of the cosmos does not require a Creator (God) either for its evolution or its sustenance. The laws of physics could explain how it originated and exists” (27). Even if such claim were true, the exigency of the world for us human beings would have Newman continue to speak of God. As Merlyn George says; “This champion of Christianity would remain as an image of a noble soul clothed in moral and spiritual grandeur and as a symbol of the triumph of soul over materialistic, hedonistic and fleshly urges of human life on its journey towards the Divine” (30).

If we examine the life of Newman, we will discover that he had enough of disappointments, conflicts, bereavements, misunderstanding, and unfulfilled dreams. Some called him a controversialist, but as a person
with a sensitive disposition he would never want to hurt others intentionally. Controversies were there in plenty in his life, but they came up because he spoke, wrote and lived the truth, which the complacent life found disturbing and questioned. His idea of the gentleman as one who never inflicts pain could only emanate from a mind that is sensitive, humble and compassionate. He was a gentleman. The many interpersonal conflicts he encountered never left him bitter against the people. He had his personal inner conflicts, which he resolved by turning to God, and seeking truth. In the face of failures, disappointments and crisis, Newman showed strong resilience based on faith and hope.

John Henry Newman will always be a name to remember as a teacher, poet, saint, artist, prophet, reformer, philosopher and theologian. No man in his century had played such influential role in the religious drama of his century as he did, but with a great price of persecution, misunderstanding, failures, and bereavements. He seemed a failure in life. However, the simple epitaph on his tombstone at the Rednal cemetery, *Ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem* (Out of shadows and images into the truth), shows that his life, which seemed to have been in “the encircling gloom” got illuminated, when the Church of his adoption recognised his true greatness, and the illumination has not dimmed from thence. The epitaph sums up the life of this great soul, who had lived intensely an honest life. He had always believed that to be alive is to change and to be perfect means to have changed often.

A comparative assessment of the liberal education of Newman with the present day university education indicates two things; the first is the specialisation of all disciplines which stands in contrast to the holistic view of the liberal education, the second is concerned with the distance education and cyber-university, which work on the utilitarian principle.
Newman's proposal for a university education is one that incorporates all branches of knowledge - humanities, religion and all sciences - to form men and women of substance in character and knowledge. In other words he argues for the holistic education of the person, which means the education of the intellect, emotion, spiritual and physical of the individual. The idea of liberal university education that Newman proposed would still be relevant to our world. The present day University education is becoming more and more specialised to the detriment of a holistic integrated education. University education is highly secularised and the idea of God is excluded from its purview. However, if education is the formation of the whole person, it should address the emotional, intellectual, physical and moral aspects of the person. Hence Newman liberal education will provide a holistic education as it incorporates all branches of knowledge, and its desired product is the gentleman who will be ready to face life's challenges.

Newman as a thinker, writer, philosopher, preacher, and mystic, had addressed effectively, the question of the conflict of faith and reason, science and religion. He proved a relentless opponent of Liberalism, which exalted human reason, and tended to demolish all religious beliefs, leading to atheism altogether. Liberalism considered religions as a matter of mere feeling, fancy and taste; reason as the only absolute and that God does not come under its purview. Newman says that Liberalism held religious belief an evil to be eliminated:

And thus Christianity has been represented as a system which stands in the way of improvement, whether in politics, education, or science; as if it were adapted to the state of knowledge, and conducive to the happiness, of the age in which it was introduced, but a positive evil in more
enlightened times; because, from its claim to infallibility, it cannot itself change, and therefore must ever be endeavouring to bend opinion to its own antiquated views (N. U. S., 2).

The honest and holy life of Newman will continue to influence and teach valuable life's lessons. In our age, when secularising tendencies continue unabated and materialistic cult, idolatry of the body, and when scientific laboratories have become temple of the atheists or agnostics, persons of the calibre and charisma of Newman, would still find relevance. Our contemporary world is highly digitalised, materialistic and techno savvy. It has enough to offer us everything, but often leave us impoverished emotionally, psychologically or spiritually. Newman would continue to address our predicaments and anxieties and tell us that science and technology can create the means for better life, but they can never offer man the motivation or the means for a change of heart. Man needs something more, someone beyond him, a power beyond him. Science and technology cannot rid man of his sins and guilt; they cannot answer the questions of his conscience. Science and technology are essential for the progress and wellbeing of man but he needs much more a God who can free him from physical drudgery and spiritual slavery and fill the void he experiences. However, modern man finds himself steep in his worldly pursuits and failing to turn his heart and mind to God. Hence, Newman, as he had tried to lead his contemporaries out of the spiritual desert, continues to challenge postmodern sensibilities and call on people of our time to religious experience and adherence to the principle of truth with his prayer:

Lead, Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom
Lead Thou me on!
The night is dark, and I am far from home—
Lead Thou me on!
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene—one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor pray'd that Thou
    Shouldst lead me on.
I loved to choose and see my path, but now
    Lead Thou me on!
I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,
Pride ruled my will: remember not past years.

So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still
    Will lead me on,
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
    The night is gone;
And with the morn those angel faces smile
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile

(Connolly 74-5).
WORKS CITED


