

Starkloff outlined in the last portion of his paper—Chiapas had moved into a fertile moment of dialogue between religious cultures—synthesis.

For his own part, Bevans maintained that theology can only be local theology. He underscored the significance of this by recalling that both Scripture and Tradition themselves are local theologies. Each is the testimony of the believing community to their experience and meaning of the Jesus revelation. It is just this new understanding of experience as the third *loci theologici* that has made the Vatican nervous.

In the forthcoming revised edition of his book, *Models of Contextual Theology*, Bevans holds that contextual theology is the interaction of the experiences of the past and the present. In the case of the past, it is those experiences recorded in the Scriptures that are pondered and defended in the Tradition. In the instance of the present, it is the experiences that we all undergo at four levels: individual lives, social location, cultural context, and the constantly evolving change in cultural expression/s. The difficulty, Bevans suggested, in our present situation is that the Vatican suspects local leadership and its experiences. This suspicion has hindered the development of local identity within the Christian community. The consequence has been that not only the richness of the gospel is inhibited, but also the Church is deprived of one more font "in understanding of the unfathomable riches of Christ."

JEANNE EVANS

*Marymount Manhattan College  
New York, New York*

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#### THOUGHT OF JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

- Topic: Signs of the Times in Newman's Thought and Strategies  
 Conveners: Edward Jeremy Miller, Gwynedd-Mercy College  
 Kevin Godfrey, Alvernia College  
 Presenters: Thomas R. Potvin, Dominican College of Theology, Ottawa  
 Gerald H. McCarren, Seton Hall University  
 Edward Jeremy Miller, Gwynedd-Mercy College

Thomas Raymond Potvin opened the seminar with a summary of his paper, "Times and Events: An Integral Part of Development of Doctrine," arguing that Newman was fully aware of the roles of times and events in the development of doctrines, starting with the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Likewise, the advancement of the church's understanding of the Deposit of Faith seems to find its natural setting in a context of needs, controversy, and even heresies. Newman states almost as an axiom "that the profession and developments of a doctrine are according to the emergency of the time (Dev 10.1. p. 401), and that

"the first step in the settling of a question of doctrine is to raise and debate it" (Dev 8.1.1.6, p. 362).

Gerald McCarren of Immaculate Conception Seminary at Seton Hall University summarized his paper, "Signs of the Times Addressed by Newman in his *Present Position of Catholics in England* apropos Signs of the Times Today." Ever considered by Newman his best written book, these 1851 lectures about "John Bull" prejudices remain relevant. Indeed one cannot read the book in the context of the present crisis facing the American Catholic church, for example, without noticing Newman's insights into prejudices against Catholics and into truthful and effective response, involves the following: recognizing that bias can be overcome "but only by degrees and with trouble" (Prepos., p. 232); acknowledging elements in distorted claims that "relate to what is really sinful and detestable" (p. 127) and making appropriate reforms; furthermore, demonstrating that elements of truth in anti-Catholic views do not constitute the truth of the intolerant opinions as such but "beat around the bush" (p. 128). "Logical inconsistency" in imputations can even be turned upon the attacker (pp. 177, 184-85). Perhaps most effective in dispelling prejudice, however, is establishing personal acquaintance with critics, and this was the task with which Newman challenged his audience in the last of the lectures. "A religion which comes from God approves itself to the conscience of the people, wherever it is really known" (p. 373).

Edward Jeremy Miller's question, "Would *Ex Corde* have been a Sign of the Times for Newman?" was answered by "It depends." It depends on what paragraph of *Ex Corde* one has in mind and who is interpreting portions of the text. He presented five theses, each supported by a brief Newman contention, for group discussion: (1) "*Ex Corde*'s main contention is that the Catholic intellectual tradition is meant to engage contemporary culture in a Catholic university, for the mutual benefit of both." Newman would agree 100% for this is the leitmotif of *Idea* and of Newman's essays in the *Gazette of the Catholic University Dublin*. (2) "*Ex Corde* is not primarily about mandata or the role of theology departments but envisions the entire university community, especially student affairs." Again Newman would be in full support, and in fact he was fired as an Oriel tutor because he saw tutorship as more than merely intellectual. (3) "*Ex Corde*, # 27, states that a Catholic university has a relationship to the church that is essential to its institutional identity." If the relationship was in the form of an animating *raison d'être*, Newman would agree with the thesis; his five Dublin lectures were against secular "mixed" education and unabashedly for Catholic education. If the relationship was construed juridically, he would demur or be very cool about it. He is clear that his idea of a Catholic university is not based on ecclesiastical supervision. See his St. Monica sermon in OS, p. 13. (4) "Catholic professors of religious disciplines should have a *mandatum*." Newman certainly wanted Catholic theology taught by persons properly trained for it; he opposed the *autodidactoi*, such as he called W.G. Ward, monkeying in it. On the other hand he would be uncomfortable with a vetting process establishing a

professor's bona fides. He was too aware of ultramontane power moves and curtailment of legitimate theological debate. (5) "Discourse Nine of *Idea* flatly says that the church watches over the teachings of the university and *superintends* its actions, and therefore Newman would support the most conservative and controlling readings of *Ex Corde*." Newman would take umbrage of this misapplication of his words in the direction of a neoorthodox agenda. Miller directed the seminar participants to the May 2002 issue of *The Newman Newsletter*, in which he uses Newman's own words and stratagems to prove that "to superintend" does not mean "to control."

Because the three presenters kept their remarks brief, there was about forty-five minutes of lively seminar discussion on the topics of the presentations. Particularly noteworthy were observations from Dick Liddy (Seton Hall) and Les Orsy (Georgetown).

EDWARD JEREMY MILLER  
Gwynedd-Mercy College  
Gwynedd Valley, Pennsylvania

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#### ECCLESIOLOGY

Topic: Generational Shifts in Ecclesiology  
 Convener: Susan K. Wood, Saint John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota  
 Presenters: Thomas Rausch, Loyola-Marymount University, California  
 Christopher Ruddy, Saint John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota

Thomas Rauch cited a number of factors leading to his impression that the concerns of his generation of theologians are different from those of younger Catholics in the academy today: current polarization in the church today, the "new apologists," the discontinuity and fragmentation in many of today's candidates for religious life, and the lack of grounding in the Catholic tradition which may lead seminarians to demand "what the Church teaches." Many young people come late to faith from a secular culture, but find little to tell them who they are as Catholics in the contemporary Catholic Church, which too often seems more concerned with church reform and with showing how similar Catholics are to other Christians. Since this seems to threaten the life of the church they've found, they are often drawn to more conservative expressions of Catholicism.

This gap in experience between the two generations leads to some attitudinal differences. An older generation is often more concerned with a rejection of the past than an embrace of the future and experience anger with the church for not changing as they had hoped and anger at the next generation for wanted forms and ways of thinking that they had rejected. Theology reflects these differences with some theologians thinking that the myriad forms of liberation theology are