

THOUGHT OF JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

Topic: John Henry Newman in Dialogue
 Convener: Kevin Godfrey, Alvernia College
 Moderator: Edward Jeremy Miller, Gwynedd-Mercy College
 Presenters: John T. Ford, The Catholic University of America
 Edward J. Ondrako, The Catholic University of America

In response to the conference theme, "Theology in Dialogue," the Thought of John Henry Newman Group explored Newman's theology in light of his dialogues with the separate worlds of science and politics. John Ford opened the session with "Newman's Theological Dialogue with the World of Science." Here, he explained that Newman attempted to allocate both science and religion appropriate places as part of a harmonious "view" of the world. Dimensions of Newman's view appeared in two discourses that he prepared as Rector of the Catholic University in Dublin. The first, "On the General Relations Between Theology and Physical Science," was presented to the School of Medicine; the second, "Christianity and Scientific Investigation," was presented to the School of Science. In these discourses, Newman addressed the tension between science and theology and proposed three ways to resolve "quarrels" between them. (1) Theology treats the supernatural, while science treats the natural. (2) Theology is deductive, while science is inductive. (3) The university as an "imperial intellect" has the authority to determine the boundaries between theology and science. Accordingly, there can never be a real collision between science and theology, though at times there are apparent collisions that are often traceable to the exaggerated conclusions of scientists or the unwarranted claims of theologians. A century and a half later, Newman's rubrics have become problematic and so the issue of science and theology is ripe for reconsideration.

In the next presentation, "Mill and Newman: On Liberty," Edward J. Ondrako juxtaposed John Stuart Mill's thesis, "utility as the ultimate appeal on all ethical questions, utility grounded on the permanent interests of man as a progressive being," with Newman's rule and measure of duty, conscience and the personal quest for truth. Mill argued for utility, while Newman argued for the cultivation of the morally responsible self *first* and utility on ethical questions *second*. Mill and Newman read Aristotle quite differently on the nature of truth and the role of *phronesis*.

Utility drives ethical decision making for Mill, whereas conscience is the driving force for Newman. In the end, liberty subsists in the unencumbered self for Mill and is functional. For Newman, liberty is a means to truth. Thus, conscience, formed in truth, not by function, leads to morally responsible behavior.

Forty-five minutes of animated discussion followed the two presentations. A major point pursued by the speakers and the audience concerned creationism, intelligent design and evolutionary theory vis-à-vis Mill's and Newman's principles.

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