

Some Major Ideas and Themes from Newman's *Ideas of the University*

The primary purpose of a University is intellectual and pedagogical, not moral or religious.

"The view taken of a University in these Discourses is the following. -- That it is a place of *teaching* universal *knowledge*. This implies that its object is, on the one hand, intellectual, not moral; and, on the other, that it is the diffusion and extension of knowledge rather than the advancement. If its object were scientific and philosophical discovery, I do not see why a University should have students; if religious training, I do not see how it can be the seat of literature and science."

From the "Preface," *The Idea of a University*

The Idea of a University is to be determined without recourse to the authority of the Church, or any authority at all.

"Observe then, Gentlemen, I have no intention, in any thing I shall say, of bringing into the argument the authority of the Church, or any authority at all; but I shall consider the question simply on the grounds of human reason and human wisdom."

From Discourse I, "Introductory," *The Idea of a University*

The range of a teaching within the University is universal; it encompasses all branches of knowledge, including Theology, and is inconsistent with restrictions of any kind.

"A University, I should lay down, by its very name professes to teach universal knowledge: Theology is surely a branch of knowledge: how then is it possible for it to profess all branches of knowledge, and yet to exclude from the subjects of its teaching one which, to say the least, is as important and as large as any of them? I do not see that either premiss of this argument is open to exception.

As to the range of University teaching, certainly the very name of University is inconsistent with restrictions of any kind."

From Discourse II, *The Idea of a University*

Often, the more narrow a person's knowledge is, the more immodest and obstinate he is in adhering to his beliefs and making generalizations on the basis of such beliefs.

"Men, whose life lies in the cultivation of one science, or the exercise of one method of thought, have no more right, though they have often more ambition, to generalize upon the basis of their own pursuit but beyond its range, than the schoolboy or the ploughman to judge of a Prime Minister. But they must have something to say on every subject; habit, fashion, the public require it of them: and, if so, they can only give sentence according to their knowledge. You might think this ought to make a person modest in his enunciations; not so: too often it happens that, in proportion to the narrowness of his knowledge, is, not his distrust of it, but the deep hold it has upon him, his absolute conviction of his own conclusions, and his positiveness in maintaining them. He has the obstinacy of the bigot, whom he scorns, without the bigot's apology, that he has been taught, as he thinks, his doctrine is from heaven."

From Discourse IV, *The Idea of a University*

University Education cannot restrict itself to "Christian Literature" alone.

"Here then, I say, you are involved in a difficulty greater than that which besets the cultivation of Science; for, if Physical Science be dangerous, as I have said, it is dangerous, because it necessarily ignores the idea of moral evil; but Literature is open to the more grievous imputation of recognizing and understanding it too well. Some one will say to me perhaps: 'Our youth shall not be corrupted. We will dispense with all general or national Literature whatever, if it be so exceptionable; we will have a Christian Literature of our own, as pure, as true, as the Jewish.' You cannot have it: -- I do not say you cannot form a select literature for the young, nay, even for the middle or lower classes; this is another matter altogether: I am speaking of University Education, which implies an extended range of reading, which has to deal with standard works of genius, or what are called the *classics* of a language: and I say, from the nature of the case, if Literature is to be made a study of human nature, you cannot have a Christian Literature. It is a contradiction in terms to attempt a sinless Literature of a sinful man."

From Discourse IX, *The Idea of a University*

The University is not a Convent or a Seminary, and it prepares students for the world by allowing them to learn about "the ways and principles and maxims" of the world.

"For why do we educate, except to prepare for the world? Why do we cultivate the intellect of the many beyond the first elements of knowledge, except for this world? Will it be much matter in the world to come whether our bodily health or our intellectual strength was more or less, except of course as this world is in all its circumstances a trial for the next? If then a University is a direct preparation for this world, let it be what it professes. It is not a Convent, it is not a Seminary; it is a place to fit men of the world for the world. We cannot possibly keep them from plunging into the world, with all its ways and principles and maxims, when their time comes; but we can prepare them against what is inevitable; and it is not the way to learn to swim in troubled waters, never to have gone into them."

From Discourse IX, *The Idea of a University*

True education requires the personal influence of teachers on students.

"An academical system without the personal influence of teachers upon pupils, is an arctic winter; it will create an ice-bound, petrified, cast-iron University, and nothing else."

From *Historical Sketches*, Volume III, "The Rise and Progress of Universities," Chapter I, Section 6.

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