

*This essay was written by Dr Elizabeth Cumming in 2001 and revised in November 2010. The assistance of both artists and the former Chaplain of Oriel College, Professor David Brown, during preparation is gratefully acknowledged. All rights reserved.*

Design by Vivienne Haig BA (Edin)

Realisation by Douglas Hogg DA (Edin) FMGP FSA Scot FRSA

This window at Oriel College was commissioned to celebrate the character, the intellect and the Christian witness of Blessed John Henry Newman (1801-90) on the bicentenary of his birth. Cardinal Newman had been Fellow of the College in 1822-45 and in 1828-43 vicar of the University church of St Mary the Virgin to the immediate north of the College. Following a competition, the commission was given to Vivienne Haig (b.1959), who had studied initially at St Martin's School of Art in London and subsequently continued her studies within the architectural glass course at Edinburgh College of Art. In the 1980s Haig had established a reputation as a designer-engraver, using the craft for both studio and architectural glass. A major commission for the Church of Our Lady of Mercy & St Philip Neri at Melbourne, Derbyshire, drew her towards painted glass and the Edinburgh course. More recent commissions have included windows in St Andrew's Episcopal Church, Innerleithen, Borders, and the Church of the Holy Family, King's Lynn.

Haig researched the Oriel College commission, arranging the iconography, developing the visual form through a substantial number of preparatory drawings, and producing the small scale design arrangement in watercolour, a beautifully articulated drawing in itself against which a palette of glass was selected. Much of the glass used is French, but also includes some pieces from Hartley Wood Glassworks in Sunderland: now closed, this factory was the last specialised mouth-blown glass producer in the country. Sarah McCabe, a fellow Edinburgh graduate, assisted Vivienne Haig in the full scale cartooning. At this point the entire project was taken over by Douglas Hogg (b.1948), Haig's former Edinburgh tutor, whose personal interpretation was to characterise its final form. An internationally celebrated glass artist, Hogg was shortlisted for the Poets' Corner window in Westminster Abbey in 1992.

Both Haig and Hogg enjoy the rich potency of a close relationship between poetry, imagery and colour. The Edinburgh style of working combines tradition with modernity, and uses glass as a canvas with an expressive application of colour and a dynamic fusion of surface. Hogg is particularly well known for this approach, which invests glass with a dialogue between material and imagination and plays with the physical and symbolic properties of light and dark. All these elements have equally informed Haig's design and Hogg's interpretative fabrication.

The site chosen to commemorate Cardinal Newman was carefully selected by the College. As Fellow and tutor at Oriel, he occupied first floor rooms 'of the most unpretending sort and furnished with extreme simplicity' to the south of the main seventeenth-century quadrangle and adjacent to the Chapel on the east. According to College historian David Watson Rannie, these 'communicated with what was in those days a kind of large closet or lumber-room, lighted by the bay window over the chapel door' and which Newman used as an oratory. With the recent restoration of the College chapel organ, the window is now accessible, and has prompted the opportunity to recreate this Oratory. As a room in which Newman passed many hours in contemplative prayer, it lies at the heart of understanding the man. The creation of this space has been enhanced by generous donations. Downside Abbey has presented the prie-dieu and lights, while the organ restoration and the Laurence Whistler engraved rosebowl illustrating scenes from Newman's life were the gifts of Norma, Lady Dalrymple-Champneys, widow of Sir Weldon Dalrymple-Champneys, Bt., CB, DM, FRCP, Honorary Fellow and benefactor of Oriel College. The window, also endowed by Norma, Lady Dalrymple-

Champneys, is the principal focus of this space, shaping and infusing the space with colour while simultaneously reflecting its early nineteenth-century history and value.

Through both imagery and a superb handling of colour, the window unites the life of Cardinal Newman with words from some of his most celebrated writings. Newman's work lay at the heart of English church debate and development from the 1830s. With fellow Oriel College dons John Keble and Edward Bouverie Pusey, Newman countered what they perceived as the increasing secularisation of British society and the devaluation of the established Church. The liberal strains of Non-conformism, a general growing indifference to religion and a rationalisation of Church of England institutions in the early nineteenth century had diminished its stature and practice. As leaders of the 'Oxford Movement', they essentially sought to revitalise the Anglican Church through sermons and published tracts. Rejecting what they saw as impending 'national apostasy', they stressed the inheritance of the national early Church in England. Newman was to write in his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (1864) that his 'battle was with liberalism'. In his *Tract XC* (1841) he stressed the legacy of the Early Christian Church doctrines to the fundamentalist Thirty-Nine Articles at the heart of the Protestant Post-Reformation Church of England and the ensuing relative closeness (but also distinction) of Anglicanism and the Catholic Church. His controversial beliefs and statements caused considerable discomfort within the Anglican Church. He retreated to the outlying branch of St Mary's parish at Littlemore, to the southeast of the city, where the members of a semi-monastic community were increasingly attracted to Roman Catholicism. Newman himself was received into the Roman faith at Littlemore in October 1845 and elevated to Cardinal in May 1879.

The window's iconography relates both Newman to Oriel College and Oriel to Oxford. The initial design contained figural references to Pusey and Keble in the lower inner sidelights. These were later abandoned to focus more securely on Newman, his life at Oxford, his character and his poetical writings. In the central light, Newman is seated in prayer to the Virgin and Child above. The Virgin stands on moonlight against a background of elemental turbulence and above the crest of the University of Oxford, etched on a double layer of flashed glass. The lights to either side of these figures contain cherubim and angels based on detailed studies from the baroque by McCabe. These angels provide an accompaniment of prayer and praise and act as intercessory communicants between Newman and the Virgin. In the lower lights, cherubim play violas in a celebration of heaven on earth. Newman, who himself played the viola, wrote that 'music is thought', and still the most widely known of his writings is his epic poem *The Dream of Gerontius* (1865, set as an oratorio by Sir Edward Elgar in 1900), whose spirit infuses the very heart of the window. Above these musician cherubim and to either side of the University crest, dark angels occupy the intermediary state between earth and heaven. Finally, in the upper set of lights, praying and questioning angels are seen in adoration of the Virgin and Child. The intensity and power of prayer is represented by strength of tone and colour.

Below the cherubim, the leadings of the quatrefoils contain images of the community of Littlemore church and dormitory cottages and of St Mary's church, the two other buildings with which Newman was most closely associated during his Oxford period. Throughout the window, concepts of continuity and integration are stressed. Leaves from the oak planted by Newman at Littlemore, for instance, also form part of the background to the angel lights above. The rendition of architectural forms recalls elements to be found in the windows of the nearby College dining hall and the chequered floor below Newman's chair links with those of both the dining hall and St Mary's. The interiors of Littlemore and St Mary's appear in the upper side light roundels below the crest of the College and the Prince of Wales. Relating to the history of the College, these symbols are placed beside the outer figures of Adam de Brome, King Edward II's almoner and founder of the College as 'The House of the Blessed Mary the Virgin in Oxford' in 1324, and Edward II himself, who refounded the College in 1326. Both appear as kneeling donor figures in prayer to the Virgin.

The diverse and questioning aspects of Cardinal Newman's life are illustrated in the window. It focuses on the essence of his character – his sensitivity, his poetic nature and his quest for truth while working as tutor and vicar within the Anglican Church. The energised angular cuttings of glass in the central lights, while typical of the Edinburgh glass style primarily associated with Douglas Hogg, are used here to symbolise Newman's struggle towards resolution of personal and ecclesiastical conflict. Throughout the window, the leadlines are used strongly as an emotive device to engage the images in a visual dynamic. Hogg also uses the textures of 'seedy' glass, where small air bubbles are caught in the medium, and 'reamy' glass, where the surface is striated, to enhance the qualities of the selected material, to promote the contemplative intimacy of the scheme, and to reflect the depth and complexity of Newman's character. Colour is employed to indicate and accentuate aspects of his life and ideas. Although he is represented as a young man in his white Oxford preaching robes, his future elevation to Cardinal is indicated by the rose-tinting of the floor on which his feet rest, its pink reflection in the motto inscribed on the architectural form below, *Cor ad cor loquitur* ('heart speaks to heart'), to be adopted for his coat-of-arms and, not least, by the prevailing warm colours of the upper sidelights. In the lower lights, a predominance of blue and brown denotes contemplative and spiritual values, while in the upper lights cleaner primary colours promote the Virgin and Child as the focus for contemplation. Light streaming into the space surrounding the central upper figures adds to the group's spiritual dimension, but also reflects the location of the statue of the Blessed Mary the Virgin in the main College quadrangle outside. The relationship between interior and exterior in fact is an important aspect of this window. Douglas Hogg has applied a calculated light glaze of white enamel to Newman's preaching robes to give the figure a sense of imbued light to be observed from either Oratory or quadrangle. Viewed from the interior especially this gives a tonal density and vibrancy that is balanced by clear areas in the columns of light carrying his words in the sidelights.

One of Newman's lasting contributions to doctrinal debate was his ideal of development and change through intellectual dedication. He believed that only frequent change could lead towards the ideal or perfection. He was a man of deeply enquiring mind who had been brought up in the evangelical tradition rooted in a close reading of scripture. This side of his nature infused his tutorship at Oriel, 'the acknowledged centre of Oxford intellectualism' although he saw a danger in 'the love of literary pursuits assuming too prominent a place in the thoughts of a college tutor'. His influential book *The Idea of a University* (1852), written in Dublin where he had been asked to help establish a Catholic university, emphatically ruled that tutors should 'teach universal knowledge', not engage primarily in academic research: students were to be taught the rudiments of intellectual enquiry, 'to think and to reason and to compare and to discriminate and to analyse', without a necessary practical application of the results. This aspect of Newman's work has been emphasised. Stacks of books either written by him or which informed his work are positioned in the lower outer lights of the window. They include a volume of his Oxford sermons as well as *The Idea of a University*, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, *the Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, *Holy Living and Holy Dying*, *Bishop Andrewes's Devotions and Bishop Andrewes's Sermons*, and the works of Saints Augustine and Basil. Each volume was carefully researched and recorded by Vivienne Haig using the resources of the College library. Newman's own words have been directly transcribed from his manuscripts of *The Pillar of the Cloud* ('Lead, kindly light') of 1833 and *The Dream of Gerontius* ('Praise to the Holiest in the height' and 'What then is prayer?') and in the inner lower sidelights next to the books. Originally, the words were to have been transferred from computerised text into etched glass: the use of his hand now accesses Newman's mind more directly.

At the foot of the central light, Cardinal Newman's celebrated dictum *Ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem*, which is fittingly inscribed on the memorial tablet at his grave, that is 'Coming out of the shadows and reflections into truth'. This glorious window presents images both as intellectual ideas and as representations of real objects, uniting them through a duality of poetic form and colour harmonies, and it celebrates truth by painting with light.